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# THE ARMY AND RELIGION



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# THE ARMY AND RELIGION

*An Enquiry and its Bearing upon the  
Religious Life of the Nation*

WITH PREFACE

BY

THE BISHOP OF WINCHESTER

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED  
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

. 1919

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## PREFACE

It seems right to explain briefly the origin of the following Enquiry. It suggested itself first to one of our company, confronted with the experience gained in work with the Y.M.C.A. among the British Army in France. He found others possessed like himself with the desire to consider and interpret what was being revealed under War conditions as to the religious life of the nation, and to bring the result before the Churches. The group was encouraged to proceed by a generous offer from the Y.M.C.A., not only to help generally, but to bear the entire expense of carrying out the Enquiry upon an adequate scale. It should, however, be clearly understood that having done this, the Y.M.C.A. left the Enquiry unreservedly to the Committee, which is alone responsible for the Report. The Council of the Association will indeed have no knowledge of the Report till its publication. For this generosity the Committee owe their cordial thanks, in which they hope their readers will join. The original group was expanded with a view to making it more

completely representative. The names are given on the fly-leaf.

The first step was the preparation and issue of a Questionnaire, which was addressed, with a request for kind and helpful reply, to a number of individuals (and in some few cases groups) of the most various kinds.

Nearly three hundred memoranda, often of considerable length, resting on the evidence of many hundred witnesses, have been thus obtained from men of all ranks, Generals down to privates, chaplains, doctors, nurses, hut leaders and workers, and also from Committees appointed at the great Bases in England and France to collect evidence. Most of them were written with keen personal interest in the matter of the Enquiry. Most remarkable was the convergence upon significant main lines of the great body of this testimony. In a few cases the Committee had the advantage of personal interviews with the witnesses. The great bulk of the written communications were confidentially "multiplied" and circulated to each member of Committee. Much which has not been quoted has been used. As the next stage the Committee were then enabled by the kindness and hospitality of the Marquis of Salisbury to spend four days together at Hatfield in August, 1917, for united consideration of the evidence. The main lines of the Report were there decided. But it was at once apparent that if the Report was to have unity, proportion, and force,

it must have a single draftsman. Dr. Cairns was unhesitatingly and unitedly asked to undertake the task ; and we are confident that the readers of the Report will hold us justified by the result.

The Report is, in general character, and in its literary form, Dr. Cairns's work. But the Committee must not be understood as casting upon Dr. Cairns the whole responsibility for the Report.

Twice after the Hatfield meeting the whole Committee met for several days, at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, in December, 1917, and as guests at Farnham in the autumn of 1918. Several whole-day meetings were also held in London. On all these occasions the Committee had before them printed memoranda supplied by Dr. Cairns. In this way the Committee had an active part in shaping the Report, and they must bear the blame for any sins of omission or commission that are found in it. It carries with it their common assurance, that the evidence has been presented fairly and in due proportion. The comment in Part II, moreover, expresses a common mind, subject to such individual differences of impression and emphasis as are in any such case natural and inevitable. But the Committee believe that their readers will recognise that the liberty allowed to their draftsman has had the effect of producing a volume which combines with its corporate character very much of the interest and coherence of individual authorship. The task which he undertook was in a high degree formidable and

laborious, involving repeated study and analysis of the evidence, and the condensation of its contents into readable form ; and requiring not a little patience and openness of mind in accepting criticisms and absorbing what there was of value in suggestions.

The Committee cannot acknowledge too cordially the unwearied patience, diligence, and courtesy with which Dr. Cairns throughout discharged his task. They desire to pay him an affectionate tribute of gratitude and admiration ; but they believe that their draftsman's best reward will be found in the public sense that he has done a great service to the Church and to all who desire, in the Lord's Name, to face frankly, humbly and teachably the situation here described and considered.

The chapter on Education was by Dr. Cairns's desire entrusted to Dr. David, Headmaster of Rugby School, and for the difficult chapter on Morals and Morale he had the special assistance of the Rev. Dr. Frere, of Mirfield, and of the Rev. A. Herbert Gray, formerly C.F. (author of the book *As Tommy Sees Us*).

The Committee are indebted to the Bishop of Kensington and to the Rev. G. K. A. Bell for permission to use and quote from the Report of "a private enquiry from chaplains made in connection with the National Mission." They desire also to tender their thanks to the Conveners of the Committees of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church, which undertook similar enquiries to our own among



the Scottish forces, for their courteous permission to use their information and reports.

The Enquiry has been confined to English and Scottish evidence and does not include Ireland, Wales, or the Dominions.

The Committee desired to obtain Roman Catholic evidence ; and through the kindness of the authorities of that Church they received several answers to the Questionnaire. To the writer of one of these, Rev. Fr. Devas, they owe special acknowledgments. They had also the advantage of a personal interview with Rev. Fr. Plater, S.J., of Campion Hall, Oxford.

Baron Friedrich von Hügel, while preferring not to be a member of the Committee and not signing the Report, gave to the Committee the most lavish help as a colleague and counsellor. He attended their meetings, took a leading part in the discussions, gave minute attention to the evidence and the memoranda, and submitted to Dr. Cairns most valuable suggestions and criticisms. No member of our body contributed more to its work, or was a more hearty comrade in its conduct. He joins us to the full in commendation of the fairness with which the evidence is summarised, and its drift indicated.

To Mr. Tatlow, not only for his organising powers and business experience, freely devoted to the work, but also for his watchful help over questions of proportion and order, the Committee are deeply grateful. To

Miss Thornton, who worked under him, the Committee desire to offer acknowledgment of much courtesy and kindness.

For the analysis, and for valuable work in final revision, the Committee are indebted to their colleague, Mrs. Bailey.

To our publishers we owe cordial thanks for their considerateness and patience in what has been necessarily a rather protracted transaction.

We can only now submit our work to the judgment of our fellow readers, and especially of our fellow-Christians, with the hope and prayer that it may do something to stir, encourage, and guide our common effort to be more true to our trusteeship of the Good News and saving grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.

EDW. WINTON :

*Chairman.*

FARNHAM CASTLE,  
*April 1919.*

Dr. Cairns desires to express his indebtedness for further invaluable assistance in revising the proofs of this report to the Revs. Dr. J. H. Leckie, R. Birch Hoyle, and W. T. Cairns.

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- The Rev. David Williams, Professor of N. T. Theology, Theological College, Aberystwyth.
- The Rev. E. S. Woods, C.F., late Chaplain, Royal Military College, Camberley, and Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge.

## TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

The list of Topics and Questions sent out to those with whom the Committee have been in correspondence is given below. Correspondents were asked to regard the questions as meant simply to give a general idea of what the Committee meant by the three Topics, and to treat them with freedom, omitting or supplementing them as they thought best.

### TOPICS AND QUESTIONS.

- (1) *What the men are thinking about Religion, Morality, and Society.*

The most vital points under this head seem to be these: Now that conventions are set aside, what faiths and standards are the men living by? Do they take a material view of life and morality, and if so, have you any opinion as to the cause of it? What are the limitations and weaknesses shown by the men, and, in consequence, what are the difficulties which the Christian Church has to face in her work for the Kingdom of God? How far are these limitations and

weaknesses due to education and social surroundings ? Is there much serious thought among them on social and religious questions, and, if so, what are they most interested in ? What are the chief difficulties in the way of belief independently of those raised by the War ? What do they criticise in the present social order ? Have they, as a whole, any clear idea of what the Christian Religion is ? Do they, in the main, think of the Christian life as the following of a number of negative commandments rather than as a life of active goodwill ? What social and extra-ecclesiastical movements have won their sympathy and support ? What do they think about Jesus Christ ?

(2) *The Changes made by the War.*

Has the War made any real difference in their moral and religious outlook and character ? Has it made them think more deeply ? Has it made any new difficulties of belief for them, or made them more open at any points to religious appeal ? It would be specially valuable if you could indicate such points—*e.g.*, the reality and power of God, the need for unselfishness, fellowship, the value of prayer, the Cross, the Living Christ, Holy Communion, the need for the Kingdom of God, the Life Beyond Death. It has been said by an experienced observer—"The soldier has got Religion ; I am not so sure that he has got Christianity." How far does your observation bear this out ? Are the men interested in how to bring about a better world and an enduring peace ?



(3) *The Relation of the Men to the Churches.*

What percentage would you say are vitally related to any of the Christian Communions? What are the hindrances keeping them out of the Churches? What do they really think of the Churches, their aims, their activities, and what they count for in the National life? Do they look at all to the Church for help in facing the social and national problems of the future? What kind of help do the men need and look for from the Church, and what changes in the Churches' methods would meeting those wants involve? Do intellectual hindrances count for much in producing indifference to the Churches?





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## INTRODUCTION

## ANALYSIS

### INTRODUCTION

The war has shed a revealing light on the past. Far-reaching changes will result from our new knowledge. Those who survive the war must bring in a better day worth the tremendous price which has been paid. This responsibility lies most of all on the Church.

A fuller understanding of the facts of the situation is essential if the Church is to meet the necessities of the day. The mind of the young manhood of the country, represented in the Army, is the heart of that situation.

The importance of this section of the nation for the future of the country cannot be exaggerated—Analogies from history—The Church needs to know their faiths and ideals.

There has long been a drift of the younger men away from the Churches. But men who misunderstand Christianity rose up in thousands to face the ordeal of war. What is the cause of the tragedy of their estrangement from Christ?

The difficulties of the inquiry. Yet there is an astonishing agreement in our evidence on vital matters. The evidence is of high quality. Different types must be distinguished.

In Part I we quote in the main the words of the witnesses; in Part II we seek to explain them.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE AIM AND SCOPE OF THE ENQUIRY

THE vast conflagration of the war has lit up the past for us with a revealing flame—we can see now the roads by which the nations have travelled to their hour of destiny. They have disclosed their hidden thoughts. The weak and the strong things in the national life of each have been dragged to the light. In our own land, for instance, we never knew before how strong was the silken bond between ourselves and the Dominions Overseas, the splendid loyalty of the masses of our people, the depth of heart of our own youth. Nor, it may be added, did we realise as we should how poor was the use we were making of that human material, how grave were the defects of our educational systems, the anarchy and materialism of our industry and commerce.

It is certain that when the war is over, and the first years of fatigue and reaction are past, there will be great and far-reaching changes, as the result of the new knowledge, in the whole structure of the national and international life of Christendom.

It is difficult to imagine the revolution that these changes are sure to make in human society. Consider

what the Crusades did for European society,—the awakening of Science, the weakening of Feudalism, the rise of absolute monarchy. But we have been living in the midst of things far greater than the Crusades, and greater than the wars of Napoleon. For good or evil, the old social and international world is going to pieces. It has been shaken and strained until it is near to foundering. How can it weather the stormy skies and seas ahead? Were the metaphor adequate to the reality the outlook would be gloomy indeed. But it only represents one side of the truth, the ruin and not the new creation. What we are witnessing, it has been truly said, is “not the wreck of a foundering ship, but of a bursting seed.” But yet again the new metaphor fails. It does not cover all the facts. A seed expands inevitably when the conditions of germination are present. But human society consists of free human spirits and therefore the seed can only come to blossom and fruit when the individuals act according to truth and love. If they will not so act, not all the ploughing and harrowing of war, nor all the sunlight of heroism and sacrifice, and the rain of tears will of themselves bring the harvest. Those who have survived the war must be up and doing, if they are to bring in that better day for humanity which shall make all the tremendous price of blood and tears seem well worth while. If we are blind to truth and deaf to love, we shall be false to the millions

Who bartered love and life and youth  
For the great prize of death in battle,

and false, too, to the coming generations, for whom they



died. Already the sense of this great debt is impelling all who have foresight to lay their plans for reconstruction. Education, Industry, Commerce, and Statesmanship are all on the alert to seize the new knowledge which they have won in the illuminating glare of war. Surely this necessity lies most of all upon the Church of Christ, which stands in the world for Him Who is the Soul of all its nobler life.

The Church in all its communions is recognising this call, and asking itself what it must do to meet the necessities of the days of storm and change ahead. To this end it is, clearly, of fundamental importance to reach a fuller understanding of the actual facts of the situation. The vital heart of that situation is the mind of the young manhood of the country, that manhood which has heroically borne the burden of its country's honour in the great camps and in the battle line.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of that section of the nation, which has been through the war, for the future of our people. It is not too much to say that it contains the flower of the younger manhood of the nation. Like Grant's veterans, these men, when they return, will dominate the future of our nation and shape its destinies for a generation to come. If we are to judge by historical analogies, their children will have an even greater share in moulding the future. The question as to what they are thinking and what they will think when they have had time to reflect on the tremendous experiences through which they have been passing, is therefore of vital importance for all who are

concerned with the future. If we do not know their thoughts, all plans for reconstruction will be simply castles in the air. That is true of the plans of our politicians and statesmen, as they will speedily discover. They may spin from their own reserves of wisdom and garnered experiences all the plans that they think best meantime. But if among those grimly enduring millions slow gathering, silent convictions are being formed of which they know nothing, our statesmen may find themselves later on facing tidal forces of feeling which will sweep them away into oblivion.

The same is true of those who share in the life and have the care of the Churches. It is of vital importance that they should know what faiths and what ideals these men are living by, and what changes, if any, the war is creating in their souls. For a long time past it has been obvious that there was a drift away from the Churches, which indicated that something was wrong. Those who were unaffected by it were, perhaps, too lightly disposed to lay the blame for most of this on the "lapsed" themselves, to ascribe it vaguely to the growing materialism of the age, and the love of pleasure overcoming the love of God. They were too apt to forget that the same deep and subtle causes were affecting the life of the Churches themselves, and depriving them of that power and gladness which in all ages have been the real factors in winning and holding the youth of a nation for God and the Life Everlasting.

Nor, it may be, did men realise the disastrous way in which the loss of the younger manhood of the nation tends to accelerate when once it has begun. The

departure of vigorous youth from the Churches throws their direction more and more into the hands of those who remain. Almost insensibly every religious community, unless fired by a very exceptional missionary and evangelistic zeal, tends to think first of the edification of those who remain, to consider their prejudices and their comforts, and to avoid all measures that may grieve or unsettle them. They are the preponderant element; they are the faithful who carry their own burden and the burden of the faithless as well, and nothing must be done to offend them. So the elements of initiative, reform, and revolution more and more pass out of the Churches, and what was a fissure widens into a gulf.

In spite of great movements of reclaim and advance something of this kind has been going on well-nigh universally for a long time past, which has aggravated immeasurably the evil wrought during the eighteenth century period of religious apathy, and the first period of the Industrial Revolution. Suddenly the whole situation has been lit up by the flame of war. In the moment of deadly peril the youth of the nation, that had often seemed so devoted to pleasure seeking, was summoned to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. There is no more stirring story in all the long and splendid history of the race than that of the great uprising of youth which followed, of the myriads who from every city and suburb and farm and village, by land or sea, poured into the great camps that sprang up as by magic all over the land; and thence passed to the hell of the trenches, enduring there everything that Jewish or mediæval imagination had ever con-

ceived as the lot of the damned—torture and death by rending, by poison, by flame—enduring, too, the horror and stench of mortality with a cheerful courage and high-heartedness that amazed us all.

It was a veritable apocalypse of youth, the taking away of a great veil that had fallen between us in the Churches and the men who stood aloof. Who can ever forget those first years of the war, the streets full of the sound of marching, unreturning feet, the stations thronged with volunteers saying farewell to mothers and sweethearts, the trains gliding off, crowded with laughing, cheering boys? *Morituri te salutamus!*

Who were these men? The chapters which follow will show that a great preponderance of them were men who “had no use” for any of the Churches, who were under an extraordinary misunderstanding as to what the Christian religion really is, who instead of faith in the Son of God had a dim notion that Jesus Christ was the best of men who died long ago, and to whom the very idea that He was alive to-day and able to help them in their hour of need, was a mere dream.

So they have passed to their terrible ordeal. Vast multitudes of them will return no more. Their bodies rest in the graveyards of Picardy and Flanders and farther lands. They did not, in the full sense, know Christ in their lives. But surely there is a deep truth in the sentiment that has put a cross of wood on every grave. Is it not as if the Christ whom they knew not in life claims them in death? But who shall measure the pathos and tragedy of that estrangement from Him Whose Cross is on their graves? Why should they not have known Him better? What hindered?



We shall try to find the answer to this later on. It will be strange if, in the light of the evidence, many will come to the conclusion that they might have come to easily before the war, that it was simply because of these men's own fault, that we do not ourselves bear a very large share of the blame.

It may be that the way for ourselves into another and fuller life may be through heartfelt repentance and amendment.

Be it never forgotten, moreover, that quite independently of this we owe these men a debt we can never repay. They have hazarded, and many of them have given, their lives for us. The Churches are able to carry on their work in quiet and security because of what those men who have no living share in their communions have done for them.

The first great difficulty attending such an enquiry as ours is the enormous size of the field to be covered.

It is quite obvious that no private enquiry could fully cover this ground.

In spite of the mass and variety of the evidence which we have received, predominantly from officers and men, we are well aware of the difficulty of generalising about a field so great. We give our evidence for what it is worth. But when this has been allowed for, something remains to be said. Some of us at the outset of the enquiry feared that the vastness and variety of the field would make definite conclusions impossible, that one paper would cross out another, and that the result would be a mere blur. But in the event on nearly all the broad outlines of the situation the papers, though coming from every kind of witness,

were found to be practically unanimous, a fact which has assisted us to reach a practically unanimous report.

On a few important points, on the other hand, our witnesses are gravely divided, and in such cases we have indicated the extent and nature of the division. It is easily explicable by the variety of the facts with which they have to deal. They are reporting on what they see, and they have seen different parts of the immense whole.

It may be pointed out that this very variety emphasises the value of their agreement when it happens, for it is a guarantee of the independence and truth of their testimony.

And while dealing with this matter of the evidence it is impossible to abstain from expressing our gratitude to those who have sent in papers. Many of them have been written by overworked men and women, by wounded men in hospitals, or by men who took down from wounded men evidence which these were unable to write. Some papers seem even to have been written from the very front itself. They are pencil jottings hastily scribbled in camp or dug-out, in huts, or in quiet places apart. Others again have been written in a brief furlough when every hour with friends must have been precious. And not a few of the writers have passed beyond reach of earthly thanks. We owe a great debt of gratitude to such men and women, and so, we believe, do all the Churches.

Taken as a whole the evidence seems to us of singularly high quality. Its amount and its character show how deeply interested the writers must have been in the

theme. Very many papers express gratitude that the inquiry should have been made, and willingness to assist it in every way possible. The poignancy of the whole situation seems to have made a deep impression on those who were living through it, and they have evidently felt the need for its being understood and considered deeply by those at home.

We much regret that it is impossible to print these papers simply as they stand. That they would make a deep impression on the public mind is certain. Failing this, the endeavour has been made to quote as far as possible the words of the witnesses themselves. This seemed better than to confine ourselves to a mere abstract of the whole.<sup>1</sup> It is possible that some readers may find the inevitable reiteration which this method involves to be wearisome. In such a case we would ask them to pass on to the latter part of the volume, which is an endeavour to explain how the situation disclosed in the evidence came to be; and to show how in our judgment its problems can best be solved. It has, of course, only been possible to quote a very small part of the whole evidence. But all the papers have been carefully studied, and many of them to which no reference has been made have been invaluable in leading us to a deeper understanding.

<sup>1</sup> The Committee are, of course, in no way responsible for the opinions expressed in these quotations and are sometimes in disagreement with them. They are given simply as illustrative evidence.





PART I  
THE FACTS

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER I

### THE RELIGIOUS IMPACT OF THE WAR

*The Nature of the Impact.* It is objected that the men in the Army are not a separate class, but the nation in arms. Yet the ordeal which they go through must change them. And, further, present conditions have given us special opportunities of understanding them.

A distinction must be drawn between those with experience only of Base Camps, etc., and those of the Line.

There is some variety in the evidence as to the moral and religious effect of the war; some deny that the men are changed. But the change needs time to mature.

It is impossible to say whether the net effect will be good or evil. Everything here depends on the Christian Church.

#### *Fundamental Religious Ideas.*

*Natural Religion.*—*I. Belief in God.* This is almost universal, though often elementary. Too much must not be made of this "natural religion." Fundamental problems are raised.

*Evidence:* In some cases religion is lost, in others new religious consciousness is awakened. This elemental religion not necessarily Christianised. "The soldier has got religion, I am not so sure he has got Christianity."

Prayer for safety in battle and its meaning.

*II. Belief in Immortality.* Faith in immortality, though vague, prevails, despite a certain popularity of Omar Khayyám, etc.

The belief results (1) from centuries of Christian training and (2) from the natural will to live.

*Evidence:* Men question more the *nature* than the *fact* of future life. A Moslem view of salvation by death in battle—spiritualistic ideas.

The Churches in their teaching will have to grapple more thoroughly with the subject of the Life to Come.

## CHAPTER I

### THE RELIGIOUS IMPACT OF THE WAR

#### *Fundamental Religious Ideas.*

#### *God, and the Life to Come.*

IN the course of the enquiries which lie at the basis of this volume, amid numerous responses which expressed satisfaction that some effort was being made from the side of the Churches to understand the new world into which the war had hurried so many, there were two which expressed surprise. "If I may be permitted," writes one, "to add a general word on the Questionnaire it is that the compilers fail to face the fact that the Army of to-day is not a class apart; it is the nation within certain limits in arms. To ask for the Army's opinions on Religion is to enquire into the views of this nation. I am more than a little doubtful of the great value to accrue from the collection of these opinions."

These writers, however, forget that our soldiers are men who have been subjected to the test of a tremendous and unparalleled experience. It is surely reasonable that we should seek to know how the young manhood of the nation has borne itself under the great

ordeal of war, and learn what effects this ordeal has had on their thoughts, their beliefs, and their ideals. It seems probable that if our statesmen and politicians are going to assume that the men who return are in effect just the same as they were before they went away they are likely to be gravely surprised. They will in all probability simply be eliminated by events. The same is true of those who lead our Churches.

Consider briefly what are the experiences through which these men have passed. A very large number of them have had to make a decisive voluntary choice, and the others, whether willing or unwilling, have been swept into a life radically different from any that they had ever imagined as possible for them. They have all given up their freedom and for their country's sake have submitted to a life regulated throughout by military discipline. Finally, great numbers of them have been continually exposed to all the tremendous experiences of the trenches and the Line; and all the rest to the monotony and temptation of the camps and the base. They have been living a life of absolutely abnormal separation from their homes, and from the society of the other sex. Is it probable that there have been no deep changes in their inner lives corresponding to these elemental changes in their environment? If no such changes have taken place, it would be desirable that we should know it, for we should certainly have learned a new and startling fact as to human nature. But even supposing the criticism were sound, it may well be questioned if we who are active in the Churches know so much about the inner life of those outside our own

communions that we can afford to miss such an opportunity of reaching a fuller understanding of them as the present conditions have given us. And it may be fairly doubted surely, if our other critic is right in his view that "our armies are composed of the young manhood of Great Britain with which every clergyman, minister, or worker at home is perfectly familiar"!

(a) We have to draw a deep and clear distinction between those who have been all the time at the Base or on home service and those who have been in the trenches and gone over the parapet. The former class have undergone the unwonted experience of discipline, and known all the temptations that must inevitably follow their separation from home. But they have never directly experienced what it is to live continually exposed to the imminent peril of torture, maiming, and death.

(b) It may be admitted that the reports on the general moral and religious effect of the war on the minds and hearts of men are much more difficult to estimate than those on other important parts of the inquiry. Here there is great variety and apparent disagreement. By far the greater number believe that the war has made a great difference, either for good or evil, but there is a considerable minority which maintains that the men are in moral and spiritual matters much what they were before.

When one considers the vastness of the whole phenomenon this is in no way surprising. Even in times of peace the effect of a great change in the conditions of life and of a great shock and strain is

often long deferred. It matures subconsciously. Some natures indeed respond and react at once. But in many cases it may take years before the real physical and mental results come to the surface. In time of war this deferment of result is far greater, for the whole spare energies of those exposed to it are concentrated on immediate duties and the avoidance of immediate dangers. Men are afraid to think, they prefer to "carry on" almost automatically. The whole outward condition of their lives is hostile to reflection.

Very many of our correspondents, in answer to our inquiries as to what the men are thinking, say that the men are not thinking at all. Sometimes this is through intense weariness and the reaction that follows excitement, and sometimes through an instinctive dread of realising to the full what they are passing through. Where men are not thinking about their experiences we cannot expect to see much immediate effect on their outlook and their lives. That, with very many, will come later, and for good and evil we shall have to reckon with it for many years to come.

The preponderance of the evidence in favour of a deep impact on the minds of many of the men not only warrants but compels us to assume that this is the real interpretation of the case of most of those in whom no great change is for the present visible. The result is only deferred.

(c) It is much more difficult to estimate the net effect of that change, whether the balance lies on the side of good or of evil. It is quite impossible on the facts before us, and, indeed, on the facts before the world, to express any well-grounded judgment on the matter. Not only



is the field far too vast for any generalisation, but the battle between good and evil is not yet decided either way. Almost everything here depends on whether or not the Christian Church will rise to its opportunity. Whether the war is to be overruled for good or not depends under God on the way in which the Christian Church brings up its reserves and flings them into the wavering battle. Speaking of the reported "revival from the trenches," a chaplain of experience says, "No, that is not the fact. But every man out here is idealising his own home, and it is up to the women when they come back not to disappoint them." And while none of our correspondents certainly lead us to believe that the men are idealising the Churches, some of them indicate that some of the finest minds are looking to them with hope that they may bring to the world some new manifestation of the Divine Power and Guidance.

Broadly speaking, the evidence shows conclusively that at the front the impact of danger awakens the religious consciousness even of the most unlikely men.

### *Belief in God.*

It is very remarkable that the whole materialistic and anti-religious propaganda, which made so much noise, and apparently had so much vogue among our labouring classes a few years ago, seems to have simply withered away in the fires of the Line. The men of the British armies, however dim their faith may be, do in the hour of danger, at least, believe in God, "the great and terrible God." Most men we are told pray before they go over the parapet, or advance in the face of machine guns, and they thank God when they have come

through the battle. It is possible to make too much and too little of this. Granting that it is at best a very elementary form of religion, and that it is usually evanescent enough, it is none the less very significant. It means that in presence of the most terrific display of material force that human history has ever seen men believe that there is an Unseen Power, inaccessible to the senses, which is yet mightier than high explosives, which knows all and which hears prayer. No one who knows the history of religion can fail to see the importance even of so simple and primitive an act of recognition of the Unseen as this. However brief and transient, it is an implicit repudiation of that material view of life which is being judged in the thunder and flame around the men who pray.

But that it is possible to make too much of it is clear, and probably one of the dangers of the future is that religious teachers should err in this way.

But the world of death and ruin in which our men are living has a much wider and deeper effect on them than this phenomenon of prayer for deliverance. It seems to crystallise what was in solution in their minds, making definite what before were indefinite and fluctuating ideas. In this it is like all acute experiences, which always drive men upward or downward.

"The war affects men in many contradictory ways," writes a chaplain. "I have had more than one case of officers previously religious who have chucked religion altogether."

A great majority of men more or less have acquired a new religious consciousness.



“The soldier has got religion, I am not so sure that he has got Christianity,” was the saying of one whose knowledge of the inner mind of the men in the trenches is generally recognised. The saying, as summing up epigrammatically a great deal that will be subsequently developed in this volume, was quoted in the paper of enquiry sent out through the forces, and men were asked if they considered this true to their experience. A very large number of answers were received. The saying was misunderstood by some. It was meant to refer to the religion rather than to the morality of the soldier. As spoken it was meant to indicate that the men who had been in the trenches had experienced an awakening of the primitive religious convictions—God, Prayer, Immortality, but that they did not associate these with Jesus Christ, that their thought of God was not Christianised. The great majority of the answers confirm this view. One very distinguished officer dissents from it, substantially on the ground that “these convictions contained in the soldier’s ‘religion’ form a truer, nobler, simpler religion than that propounded by the Churches.”

In general the saying, however, was seized on as expressing the heart of the situation. Something has awakened in the minds of men who have been passing through the furnace, which was dormant before. The significant thing is that it was just in this region of elemental faith that the religion of our days had been weakest. The real trouble of our time was not so much that it was difficult to believe in the specific doctrines of Christianity. It lay deeper. The real trouble was that it was difficult to believe in God. The structure of Chris-

tian faith was being undermined at the base by the materialism of the age. Yet this was not generally recognised by the preaching of the time. It will need to be recognised in the future, if we are to meet the needs of these men. "Then again," writes an officer, "the problems which this war mixes up are problems about fundamentals—the existence of God, His Omnipotence, His Love, and so on. I think that in our talks I have often said to you that we have taken these ideals about God, which are the ultimate basis of all religion, far too much for granted." The thought of God has come back again to many, but as yet it has not been Christianised. "The religion of ninety per cent. of the men at the front," writes a Scottish officer, "is not distinctively Christian, but a religion of patriotism and of valour, tinged with chivalry, and at the best merely coloured with sentiment and emotion borrowed from Christianity."

Of course this is not true of all. In the case of very many the religious awakening has been profoundly Christian. The God to whom they have awakened has been "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The trouble with them had been that while through early training they had been in possession of the knowledge of God in Christ, they had never realised Him. But now the invisible writing sprang in the flame to life. A chaplain who had served in the ranks describes his own experience thus : "Two convictions possessed me. The first was the Reality of God, and the other the absolute impossibility that so great a thing as life, as we were experiencing it, could come to an end with death." Later on the same man was wounded on the No Man's

Land. As he lay there helpless, waiting for the German machine-guns to open fire, and utterly without any hope of coming through alive, the new won sense of Almighty God welled up in his spirit and filled it with absolute peace. He knew that no real evil could befall him. His one regret was for the sorrow of his friends. But "underneath were the Everlasting Arms."<sup>1</sup>

Another officer writes : "To me it is miraculous, powerful. The immanent wells up in you, creating in you your response to it, making you, sustaining you. May I never forget the revelation of God which I have had during the last twelve months ! May its inspiration and glory never fail to thrill and warm me ! I shall never be sorry for my decision to join the Army, because I have seen two great facts : (1) a revelation of a real Immanent, Personal God ; (2) a revelation of the heights to which ordinary uncultivated human nature can rise. It seems to me that the Christian fellowship must produce the condition of Life in which these revelations are possible. For example, the life we lived before the war was so easy, normal, conventional, that it required some imagination to picture any need for a God, especially for the God and Father of our Lord. There was no pressing need, no urgent call upon Him, except now and again in panic. And I have found the panic-stricken cry very ineffective ; but the quiet communion, the taking for granted, and the need of talking with Him, seem to invoke the presence, and He gives you the power to walk through a barrage unafraid. I know there are people who can pray effectively at

<sup>1</sup> Note the parallel in "A Student in Arms," "An Englishman Prays."

home praying for me. How far this accounts for my state of mind and heart during those terrible scenes I do not know—at any rate it required a European war to give me my greatest vision of God.”

These are typical experiences from one extreme of the immense spectrum. They are given at length as they disclose in the fullest form the content of the general experience. We can only understand the whole in the light of the highest and fullest religious experience. For us Christians it is the type to which all the others are moving. To talk slightingly of “funk religion” is to begin at the wrong end, and to miss the meaning of what is going on. The mere instinctive prayer to God for safety in danger is, it is true, a very rudimentary thing, but it is the germ of something inconceivably beautiful and great. The tragedy has been that with so many it has never as yet got any further.

“In times of danger men cry out to God. In spite of the fact that very often stark fear may be at the bottom of their prayers, yet it must be remembered that these cries have been wrung out from the utmost depths of their hearts. In many cases they have never really been absolutely in earnest before in their lives, they have been brought face to face with death, and while there *have spoken to God* and they will never be quite the same afterwards. They have had, perhaps for the first time, a certain definite religious experience ; it is a foundation for further building.”

In general, the religious consciousness has been awakened by the sheer sense of helplessness, danger, and need. But one exceptionally qualified



witness, who passed as an artillery officer through the tremendous battles on the Somme, speaking of this new sense of God and of the eternal world, says that it did not come to men so much as a refuge in hours of danger as in moments when, if they were to "carry on," they had to do and to endure beyond the limits of human strength, when things had to be done that it seemed could not be done. At such moments God came into the void, and with His coming a new spring of moral energy was opened. All who have studied the story of religion will recognise something there in line with the thoughts of the greatest among the spiritual leaders of men, something which is of the very soul of religion.

At the lowest end of the spectrum we have little but a dim sense of need for God. The officer referred to above,<sup>1</sup> who served in the ranks to begin with, and, after being wounded, became a chaplain, interprets the average irreligious man's thoughts as follows: "As he draws near the Line for the first time, he becomes growingly aware that he had missed something vital in life, something that if he had it now would fill the great void in his spirit, and bring him through the time that awaits him. He becomes aware of this need for God, but he does not know how to find Him, and often there is nobody to tell him. He resolves that if he comes through alive, he will seek till he finds. He prays in the hour of battle. But when he goes back to the rest camp or the base he forgets, and often yields to temptation. The void seems to have been filled by earthly things. But the want is felt again when he goes back to the front. This may happen again and

. <sup>1</sup> Pp. 10, 11.

again." Between these extremes there are infinite gradations.

What seems to happen is that the universal sense of need more or less sets all men seeking for God, and that in the search they fall back on the religious ideas that they have learned and often forgotten, or on such fragments of them as may remain. Their materialism simply vanishes for the time. It is of no use to them in their hour of need.

Other points which might arise here will be dealt with in another chapter. We wish now to inquire into the men's

### *Belief in Immortality.*

Inquiry as to the thoughts of the men about the life to come has yielded less in amount than might have been expected. About a fifth of the memoranda which have been received refer to the matter. It must be emphasised again that for the most part these refer not to the definitely believing men, but to the great majority who make little or no profession.

We may consider the witness under two heads : the fact of the future life, and the nature of the future life.

(1) The religious spectrum here corresponds with that described in the previous section. At one end, in the case of the definitely believing man the challenge of facing all the terrors of the material world leagued together for his death and destruction awakens the splendid faith in Immortality. "I felt it absolutely impossible that so great a thing as life, as we were experiencing it, could end with death."

No doubt human nature cannot always remain at

this pitch of insight. A medical officer with the Salonika forces writes : " One day death makes me feel certain that there is an eternity ; another day the cemeteries and the absolute nothingness that is left of a friend, as the result of an explosion, make it really difficult to believe in the eternal value of the individual."

It is good to know that throughout the whole spectrum the positive faith in immortality prevails. It is true that there is an opposite extreme. The war is a terrific display of the power of material force. Everything seems to depend on material resources and numbers. It appears as if there were a like end to the just and the unjust. From a New Zealand Ambulance a private writes : " I don't think many pay much consideration to the life beyond death. It is all death here, and life is pretty miserable." There is repeated reference in the papers to the popularity among educated men of Omar Khayyám, and, among men of all ranks, to the prevalence of the maxim, " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Of course, such a spirit deadens the faith in immortality. It counteracts and overcomes both the natural impulse to live on, and the spiritual confidence which is the root of the conviction that death does not end all. It accepts mortality as the end of all. " The educated man finds the expression for his doubts in Omar's melodious Epicureanism :

' Heaven but the vision of fulfilled desire,  
Hell but the shadow of the soul's desire  
Cast on the darkness.' "

The uneducated man puts it in his own way, " I reckon that some of us will soon be pushin' up the daisies."

But this is quite clearly not the ordinary temper of the men. The marked drift of the evidence is that, taken as a whole, the men, though vaguely, believe in the life to come. "There is a Beyond, but it is a great mystery." "Mostly the men believe in God and a vague future life." Here and there the evidence sinks below this average, and here and there rises above it.

Whatever their present attitude to the Churches may be, they have in them the result of many centuries of Christian training and of the home life that springs up in such a soil. This moral conviction is reinforced by the natural will to live, the *élan vital* of Bergson which "seeks even to surmount death itself." Both motives are clearly traceable in the evidence, either in separation or in union.

The latter is expressed in one very striking paper by an officer in one of the Highland regiments. "Get a soldier to face the fact of death theoretically and his bias will come to light, a vague sense of the inherent necessity of an after-life reveals itself. This is not strange. Can the same mind conceive death as an incident in the day's work and as the end of all things? Not in many cases; in young manhood hardly ever. The vacuum is too abhorrent. The strangeness lies rather in the *nature* of this vague instinct which is simply that somehow, somewhere, life, *as we know it*, goes on. There is hardly the shadow of a semblance to any Christian doctrine, because there is no hint of the conception of sin, or of life as a tainted thing crying for purification. Intimations of this instinct are apt to recall pages of 'The Golden Bough,' and like these, the very unconsciousness of them is the



source of their vitality and their power to control the springs of action."

The other motive and reason for belief in the life to come is emphasised also by a chaplain in a Highland regiment, an ex-combatant. "They do not argue much at all about life after death. The very general feeling is that death (they have seen it so often) cannot be the end, or there is no God."

Another chaplain writes from an English camp: "The normal demand for immortality is very general, and the claim of that one Voice which dares confront the world, saying 'I give unto them eternal Life,' arrests them."

From a brigadier-general: "I think the greatest change in men's views on social and religious questions after the war will come from the fact that not only a belief but a perfect faith in life beyond death will be almost universal among men who have actually taken part in the fighting. To nearly all of us, I think, it is not that we believe in a future life, but that we *know* that there is a life beyond death. This is where we shall all be open to religious appeal, and where the Churches will have a great chance."

This last sentence in particular goes to the heart of the matter. What we have to realise is that with most there is not so much a revival of religious faith, as a revival of a new interest and a sense of need. This is what constitutes the opportunity. If rightly used it may be turned into a deep and strong movement towards Life in God.

(2) The general testimony, though this is not quite unqualified, is that men are more interested in the *nature* than in the *fact* of the life to come.

The one qualification relates to men at a base camp in which one of our correspondents found little interest in questions relating to the life to come compared with that in social problems. This he attributes to the depression in the sense of the value of personality caused first by economic home conditions, and second by army conditions.

But in general the testimony goes the other way. One writer of wide experience says, "There is a fair amount of serious thought on 'What happens when we die?' " (the content not the fact of immortality).

A Wesleyan chaplain writes : "As a result of lecturing in Y.M.C.A. huts on 'Life after Death' I feel convinced that very few have any doubt as to the fact of the after-life. But their interest is far greater when the *nature* of the after-life is discussed, and any teachings on this side of the subject are listened to with the keenest interest and criticism."

Another minister, working in a Y.M.C.A. hut in France, among skilled mechanics, writes : "Of a life after death, all seem sure, but 'a man jumps his chance when his number is up' is how most of them viewed the exit into the Unseen. Eternal torment is not held. Death is not the end, only a junction ; but what lies beyond is very vague. Immortality as an opening for future service, with fuller scope and better instruments of expression ; this very few see. Yet the old view that character is universally fixed at death is not held by many ; the few who hold it do so by tradition. All the best instincts feel that men will get fair judgment and chances for improvement in another world."

From an officer and ex-minister with an English

regiment : “ He is interested in questions regarding the after-life. Is there any such thing ? If so, what is it ? What are the qualifications for it ? Is it not enough to live an ordinary good life ? Surely if Christianity is right, God will give the well-meaning multitude a second chance, and in the end smuggle them in.”

From a captain in the R.A.M.C. : “ The life beyond the grave is very widely believed in, though in a vague way. It is apparently taken for granted by many that all ‘ good fellows ’ who die for their country will go to heaven, but that there is a future judgment for the cruel, and specially for the German War Lords.”

From a Roman Catholic chaplain : “ I have not met any men who deny God’s existence. I think they all believe in Him and reverence Him. He is kindly disposed, but unable to do much. He knows all they do, but if there is a hell, He will manage at the last moment somehow to save them. . . . I know of one man in a charge shouting out, ‘ It’s a bad day for any man who’s afraid to meet his God. Thank God, I’m not afraid.’ What he meant was that he was no worse than the majority of them—his standard.”

The idea of salvation by death in battle for one’s country has been widely prevalent, and is one of those points in which the religion of the trenches has rather a Moslem than a Christian colour.

Three of the papers refer to the presence of spiritualistic ideas. One, from a chaplain, says : “ There is some interest in spiritualism, but not so much as there is outside the Army.”

Another, an officer (R.G.A. and R.F.C.), says : “ We

have lost faith in the power of our clergy to clear up the mystery. We have considerably more faith in the power of such men of science as Sir Oliver Lodge or Sir William Crookes to elucidate matters—not that we have too great faith in them.”

And an officer in a Highland regiment writes : “ A very dangerous belief in spiritualism is gaining ground, and a tendency towards dabbling in it.”

The impression that the whole of this part of the evidence leaves on the mind is that in their teaching the Churches will need to grapple with this subject of the Life to come in a much more thorough and resolute way than they have hitherto done. They must speak out what they believe with much greater candour than has been their practice of later years. Let them state their difficulties, and the imperfections of their knowledge as well. The men will appreciate what they do say all the more. But the policy of silence will be of no avail with those who return with deep memories in their hearts of the friends whom they have lost, and of the moments when “ Death brushed them with his wings.”

## ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER II

#### THE GREAT DIFFICULTY OF "NATURAL RELIGION"—GOD AND THE WAR

As reflection is awakened the great difficulty arises, How to reconcile the new belief in God with the fact of the world-war? "Natural Religion" is unable to meet it.

*Evidence:* Men puzzled about God's nature: tendency to put a lower value on human life in the face of war-machinery leads to cynical views of God: can the guiding power of such a world be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?: danger of reaction, of doubt and pessimism: Almighty—what does it mean?: preacher's duty to proclaim the nature of God: problem of suffering: difficulties raised by blatant triumph of materialism: some feel rebellion against God: principle of free-will not grasped.

The evidence shows a deep and widespread commotion of thought on the most radical of all religious problems. The faith of the future will be that which deals most adequately with the problem of evil.



## CHAPTER II

### THE GREAT DIFFICULTY OF "NATURAL RELIGION."— GOD AND THE WAR

IT has been seen in the preceding chapter that one of the first effects of the impact of war upon the minds of the men is to awaken in them either an immediate and intuitive consciousness of God or a great sense of need of Him. But when reflection awakens, the great difficulty that at once arises is as to how it is possible to reconcile this conviction with the existence of so revolting and terrible a thing as the world-war. This has been the one great and universally felt difficulty of belief which outweighed all the others put together. It is very important that we should realise how deep has been this perplexity among all the thinking minds in the Army. We shall therefore give here a number of quotations illustrating this point.

From a chaplain of large hospital experience : " Many of them, who have really had the idea at the back of their minds that God orders every event in this world from some serene heaven beyond the skies, while, as I have said before, they have not abandoned belief in God, have come to look upon Him rather as a God who ' hides Himself.' I fancy that they look

upon Him as friendly, but, taking it for granted that He sent the war, they are profoundly puzzled, and it seems to me they are ready to welcome, just for this very reason, any genuine attempt to give them a reasonable exposition of the character of God and His relation to this world."

From a Wesleyan chaplain, Midland regiment: "In the later battles of the war the scale of the machinery provided for the destruction of human life is gigantic. Its diversity also is manifold. A man feels so puny before a 15-inch shell! All this has a great tendency to depress the value we nominally put upon human life. With this tendency there also goes another. We, consciously or unconsciously, lower the value and use of God. 'After all, He seems so distant and so heedless! Besides, what can God Himself do—passing through a German barrage?'

"This affects us all, whether religious or no. Some are inclined to bitter and cynical views of God accordingly. They complain as to why God 'permits' or 'allows' this, that, and the other. Whether or no these men are more or less in number than those who would take similar views about God if an earthquake happens, or a *Titanic* is lost in peace time, I am unable to judge."

From a chaplain with a Scottish regiment: "They are conscious of being in the hands of a Power which controls the world; they are conscious of their impotence and littleness. But they are not prepared to believe that this Power is or can be called 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' They believe that they see no evidence of a loving control of



this appalling world, though they may believe in some control by One who has created and who governs the world. I think a number of them would agree with Thomas Carlyle's saying as to how 'God seems to do nothing'—nothing, *i.e.*, which one might expect from One whom one believes to be the Father of men. I think the question which religious men have to face in the future is simply the relation of God to His world. In what sense does He guide it at all? I believe a large number of thoughtful men in the Army have had that question raised in a very crucial way; but then I also believe that the same question has been directly raised for men who are not in the Army at all. It is raised for thoughtful men in the nation."

From a staff chaplain, G.H.Q. : "After three years of war it is possible to get a truer conception of the whole situation than it was in those earlier days of the war when men turned to the Unseen in sublime confidence or helplessness and bewilderment. It may be well maintained that the attitude of the Army to-day towards religion is fairly indicative of the normal attitude of the British people as a whole toward religion.

"There is much in the whole situation that is profoundly disquieting. . . . (a) To a very large proportion of the men God Himself means little or nothing, or means something that is very unchristian. The men are up against the terrible forces of sin, death, fate, as indeed they were, in scarcely less terrible fashion, in peace time; and to put it quite simply, they have not a chance. One remembers how our Lord on one occasion 'saw much people, and was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as

sheep not having a shepherd,' and He began (we are told) to teach them many things. And that situation has its parallel to-day.

“And (b) this state of affairs must lead us to the gravest misgivings with regard to the future, for, despite all that can be said about the unconscious Christianity of our men, can Christian character be long maintained unless it be rooted and grounded in a personal relationship towards the Christian God? . . .

“The days of action will be succeeded by others more conducive to calm reflection, and unless they come to see that there is an eternal background to the daily life of man, and that in the very constitution of the universe (or as we should say, in the heart and purpose of God) there is something that corresponds with—and therefore justifies and may stimulate afresh—such heroism and devotion as they have displayed since the outbreak of war, . . . there is grave danger that in many quarters there will come a reaction marked by doubt, and pessimism, and a bitter resentment, towards this heartless, unhelpful tyrant of heaven whom they call God.

“‘Almighty,’ men say God is. But it does not look like it, for He does nothing to help matters on—does not even care enough for us down here to relieve human suffering.

“Much of this is due to a ‘lamentable ignorance and misconception of what men are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of them.’

“Therefore ‘the preacher’s first duty is to *proclaim* God—His nature and His will’—especially along the following lines.

“(1) God is concerned with this present world in which men toil and suffer.

“(2) Here there is a call for great but simple teaching on the Providential government of the Universe, and of individual lives.

“(3) How do we know all this about God ? . . . Because of Jesus Christ . . .

“(4) Teaching about God the Holy Spirit.”

From a chaplain with a Scottish regiment : “ They are very conscious of the presence of God in individual life. . . . I have found that a great many men have a real sense of God’s presence with them and pray to Him with a firm belief that He is concerned with individual lives, and is able to protect.

“ A very large number of men have found new difficulties for faith as a result of the war. With some it has resulted in complete loss of faith in a personal God. With others there is an intellectual difficulty which they have tried to explain, but no real loss of belief. I think a large number are in that latter category, and are quite ready to appreciate any arguments for the faith, in spite of what has happened.”

From a chaplain, H.Q. 20th Division : “ They are intensely interested in religious problems as far as they bear on life and conduct ; and though extremely bored by ‘ doctrine ’ are aching for a true *Theology*. Nearly all the serious questions about God come down in the end to the problem of *suffering*, which bears out the conclusion I reach on other grounds, that we must preach the Cross far more emphatically ”

From a sergeant in the R.A.M.C., who describes himself as an agnostic : “ Many were profoundly affected

by the war. . . . How are we to reconcile this frightful thing with an all-loving, all-wise, all-powerful Creator? I think a biggish proportion of the rank and file are really secretly thinking of such things, but vaguely and without definite expression."

From an officer in a West Country regiment: "As a result of the war there arise doubts as to the existence of God, or, if He exists, doubts as to His power to interfere with the world-order as He apparently does not do so now, when such sufferings and bloodshed would stir the heart of a God. . . . He wants to believe in God if one will show him how."

From an officer, formerly a private—experience with Lancashire factory hands: "Here then is a mass of experience. To the average man it came in an overwhelming flood. He could not co-ordinate it all. He felt himself the sport of the gods. He had no spiritual interpretation ready. He fell back in his paganism, which thus becomes developed, hard, and crystallised. He never referred these happenings to God. I think there was a vague faith that somehow things were all right, but of definite religious feeling there was none. Memories of early religious training recurred, but the old phrases held no key to the mystery. The facts as he found them did not suggest a universe benevolently disposed, and, being without religious foundations, he found talk of a loving God so remote from experience as to be incredible."

From a chaplain—one year at a base in France, then with Highland regiments up the Line: "They are especially open to instruction regarding



‘Providence and the War.’ Most are in a measure, small or great, puzzled and perplexed by the war, and any real illumination is gladly welcomed. . . .

“There is a craving—vocal or mute—for light on the subject of undeserved suffering. Not a few have come to regard what they have seen and suffered as incompatible with the reign of a loving Father. The chaplain who can portray the story of the Cross and Resurrection in terms of the soldier’s own experience will find the soil crying for the seed.”

From a minister, hut worker in France and chaplain :  
“ ‘Is God responsible for the war ? ’ was a topic I could always get a lot of men to discuss. Older men had the Blatchford answer pat. Younger men (20—25 years old) were hardly touched by it. The answer that individual responsibility was permitted by a good God generally sufficed ; but God not causally responsible, only permissively so.”

From an officer in the R.A.M.C. : “With a certain number of men a feeling of rebellion against God has arisen because ‘He allows all this bloodshed and horror.’ I do not think this feeling is as widespread amongst men, except atheists of long standing, as amongst women. Mr. H. G. Wells’s conception in ‘Mr. Britling Sees It Through’ is largely accepted as a relief.”

From an officer with a South of England regiment—experience since 1914 : “Burdened man has lost touch of God as omnipotent in all the horror of war ; and it is up to us (laity and clergy) to show forth to the world by our faith and doctrine with boldness that God omnipotent is still ‘Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.’

“Man seems to have lost faith in God as merciful

Love. I have heard the question put to me often, on account of the slaughter and devilry shown to-day in war."

From an officer of the A.S.C.—four years' service :  
"One difficulty of belief seems very apparent and its principle seems but scantily known and realised. It is in connection with the Fatherhood and Love of God during the present crisis, and the principle involved is that of free-will. It seems difficult to realise that man has been given a free hand for good or evil, and Christ's way of teaching men to labour in the right way to work out their own salvation, and His imploring them to do so against taking the risks of their misbehaviour, does not seem to be realised by many."

Finally, the report from a great French base sums up the questions raised by the war as follows : "Such difficulties as are prevalent and genuine are those that have a direct relation to the war, *e.g.* :

"(a) How can Christianity and war be reconciled ?

"(b) How can the conception of God as Omnipotent and Love be maintained in face of the horrors, hatreds, and sufferings of war ?

"(c) Why should the innocent suffer with the guilty ?

"(d) How can human freedom co-exist along with Divine foreknowledge and fore-ordination ?

"The men respond to a living preacher who recognises that besides being soldiers they are men, and capable of the full experience of life, with God through Jesus Christ."

These are but samples of many other passages in our evidence, which bring out in the most striking fashion that there has been a deep and widespread commotion of thought throughout the Army among all

thoughtful men on the most radical of all religious problems. The great fact of the war has come crashing into the midst of the dim and instinctive theism which is the working faith of perhaps the majority of the youth of our nation, and it is proving wholly insufficient for the spiritual need of the men who have hitherto held it. It is well also to remember that the same impoverished type of faith prevails widely at home, and there also has too often proved itself unfit to meet the shock of the times. The brute facts which have wrought such confusion in the minds of the soldiers have come also with rude hands into the sanctuaries of their kindred. It has become evident that the faith which will command the future will be that which deals most adequately with the problem of evil. It has long been taken as a commonplace of theology that that problem of evil is insoluble. It seems improbable that the religious mind, during the coming generation, will be willing so easily to dismiss the matter. It seems more probable that the pressure of these questions will once more set the human intelligence moving on the paths of earnest and reverent inquiry. It is certain at least that there are many men and women throughout the country who will henceforth seek to know more definitely what solution Christianity has to give of the great problem of God and the War. In such a volume as this it is impossible to evade the outlines of such an enquiry<sup>1</sup> if we are really to meet the deepest questioning and spiritual need of our time.

<sup>1</sup> For a continuation of the enquiry mentioned here, see Chapter II, Part II, of this volume.



# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER III

### THOUGHTS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

The endeavour to discover the average soldier's mind about Jesus Christ is of the greatest importance. We have much evidence here. Universal respect is felt for Him, though the heroic side of His character seems largely unknown. There is little knowledge of Him as the Son of God, the atoning sacrifice, or as the source of living power.

*Evidence* : Little thought about Him : vagueness of idea of Christ : His remoteness.

The men's failure to connect Him with their new recognition of the heroic virtues may destroy even the faith they have.

*Evidence* : Christ's doctrines womanly : sentimentality of the traditional presentation.

There is great need for teaching of the deeper truths about Christ, His power and presence.

*The Cross* has won a new meaning as the symbol of self-sacrifice, but there is little knowledge of it as Atonement, or as revealing the nature of God.

*Evidence* : Appeal of the Cross strong : need to connect the Cross with all that is known of sacrifice.

*The Living Christ*, working through the Holy Spirit, is practically unknown.

*Evidence* : Christ an historical figure, not a present redeemer : Living Christ only more real to men previously real Christians : two exceptions to above evidence.

The practical religion of the men is a vague theism—God and Christ are not connected. The *help* of the great Christian truths has not been seen.

The sincere Christian is to be found, and is respected. The majority reverence the human Jesus, and there is no hostility.

The profane use of His Name.

The Churches must preach Christ as the giver of power.

## CHAPTER III

### THOUGHTS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

THERE is no point in our whole enquiry that is more central than the endeavour to discover the average soldier's mind about Jesus Christ. To find out this we put three questions. We asked directly what the men thought about Jesus Christ, and in the enquiry as to "points of contact" we asked what they thought of the Cross and of the Living Christ. There was a very abundant answer on the whole subject, which carries us far into the heart of the whole situation, and which we think needs to be deeply pondered. This is pre-eminently one of the points at which, ideally, it would have been desirable to lay the whole material before our readers. Here we can only give a summary and an impression. The whole situation and its causes are tolerably plain, though the general result may be startling to many of our readers.

We shall begin by summarising the general result, and shall then adduce evidence illustrating the various points, with some discussion of their meaning. Fuller examination of those conclusions will follow in the second part of this volume.

*The Personality of Christ.*

There is practically universal respect and even reverence for Jesus Christ. This is quite plainly seen whenever the men disclose their real thoughts about Him, though it is often superficially disguised by the profane use of His name. It comes out, also, in many incidental and indirect ways, to which reference is made in the text. He is recognised by all the serious thinking men as the best of the race, though there is this very frequent qualification, which seems inconsistent, that the heroic side of His character is largely unknown, and it is clear that, even as a man, the outlines of His figure are very dim. We are told also that they do not seem to think much about Him. It is only when they do think that this reverence appears. They distinguish Him quite clearly from the Churches, which, as we shall see in a later chapter, they criticise without stint. But the whole deeper side of the Church's teaching about Jesus Christ seems to have little or no hold upon them, except of the loosest kind. Of Jesus as the Son of God, and as the Atoning Sacrifice for the world, they have little or no knowledge at all. Even more significant, perhaps, is it that our question as to whether the men knew of the Living Christ, that is to say, the Christ whose presence and power are realised by His servants, met with a negative that was practically universal, and that in many cases, when this Gospel was preached to them, it came as a startling novelty and attracted immediate attention. We shall now proceed to illustrate these points, beginning with our more negative answers.

From a representative committee at a base : " They do not think about Jesus Christ at all. They believe in a Supreme Being, but they do not often associate their thoughts and needs with Jesus Christ."

From an officer in one of the London regiments : " The message of Christ has clearly never reached the great majority of the men at all."

From a Y.M.C.A. hut worker : " I have not met the man yet who would point the finger of criticism at Jesus, but I am doubtful if He stands for more than a name to them. What, you ask, do the men think about Christ ? They do not think about Him at all, I believe."

In a very able paper from an officer of wide experience we read : " Jesus Christ is, in my opinion, not present to their consciousness, either as an idea or example. They do not think about Him at all, I believe."

From an evangelist working with the Y.M.C.A. : " The Christ of the Bible has no hold upon them. His life, death and resurrection form a story that has a remoteness, bankrupt of present appeal."

From an officer in a Highland<sup>1</sup> regiment : " Little is thought of Jesus Christ."

A Presbyterian chaplain, after a year and nine months with one of the Scottish Divisions, writes : " As a whole they are religious, but not Christian. The men, as a rule, are not hostile to the Christian religion, but are rather indifferent. They regard it as

<sup>1</sup> We use the word " Highland " of the " kilted " regiments. Very many of these are recruited from all parts of Scotland, and in the later armies from England as well. They are predominantly Scottish regiments, but only some of them are predominantly from the Celtic Highlands.

impracticable and inefficient. Most of the men believe in God, but have only a fitful sense of their need of Him. It is His help they seek more than fellowship with Him. They do not realise as they ought their personal relationship to Jesus Christ. He appears to them rather as an historical figure than as a presence and power in their lives."

From a hut worker (experience with motor transport men at a French base): "They have a great admiration for Jesus Christ, and look upon Him as the great example for men, but since they have no real conviction of sin, they naturally do not look to Him as their Saviour. With the exception of a few, they have no real difficulties about the Atonement, the Divinity of Christ and justification by faith, simply because it is no concern of theirs."

From a chaplain with a Scottish territorial regiment: "They had a reverence, admiration, and vague trust in Jesus Christ. I do not think that as a whole they had come to recognise Him as the revealer of God to man, and the Saviour and guide and friend of man."

From a minister and Y.M.C.A. hut worker: "They think well of Jesus Christ, but His divinity is not always accepted. He is regarded as one of the prophets."

From a hut worker of experience: "Jesus Christ is to them a good man who lived a long time ago, and who did wonderful things, and died on the Cross to save sinners, but why and how they have no idea."

These testimonies, taken almost at random, might be multiplied, but enough has been given to show the general trend of the evidence.



From a chaplain, Church of England, work largely with A.S.C., Engineers, and R.A.M.C. : "Along with this goes a real reverence for Jesus Christ. Its implications are seldom thought out or applied to a man's own life. Most men are not opposed or alienated. They had not been near enough for that. It had not occurred to them to consider religion as having a vital bearing on their own lives."

From a woman hut worker at a base in France : "Christ is a far-off, historical character, the great ideal of clean living, the background to our child prayers, the beautiful beneficent figure in art productions, but He has nothing to do with the daily round."

From a quartermaster-sergeant in the A.S.C. : "We feel the example of Christ so unapproachable, especially at the present time. There is certainly a great reverence for Jesus Christ and His teaching deep in the hearts of most of us, and the homage paid to the many shrines and the wayside crucifix so often passed on the roads out here tends to prove this. It may be only by a glance or turning of the head, but, as a rule, there is certainly no ridicule or pronounced indifference."

From a Y.M.C.A. director of religious work in a base : "The theism of the Army is Mohammedan rather than Christian. I have never heard men allude to Jesus Christ otherwise than with admiration and reverence, but I doubt if any large number of the men think of Him in evangelical terms."

The few papers from the Dominion troops which we have received agree with this general result.

While there is this genuine reverence for the human Christ as the most sacred name in the history of man-



kind, there is, as has been said above, one serious qualification. The men seem to have been taught in their youth a conception of Him, which lays all the emphasis on the gentler side of His human character ; the heroic side has been largely ignored. It is clear that we have here the roots of much mischief. It extends not only to the character but to the teaching of our Lord, about which there is the same dimness in their minds. Their experiences in the trenches, as our evidence indicates, has led to many revaluations in the moral ideal. The heroic virtues have acquired an altogether new prominence. Unless we can succeed, therefore, in showing the greatness and heroism of the character of our Lord, there may be a great breaking away even from such faith in Him as they have. The cause of it is that such religious knowledge of Him as they have is largely a survival from childish days. It became insufficient to hold the adolescent, with his worship of the adventurous and heroic, and after he left the teaching and influence of his childhood he has never had or has never taken the opportunity of remedying the defects of his earlier training. It is not possible to lay too much stress upon this point. The study of the adolescent mind, and the discovery of the true methods of teaching it religion, are life or death questions for the Christian Church in the coming age. Let us hear a few of our witnesses again.

From a private, R.A.M.C. : “ ‘ What think ye of Christ ? ’ The men as a whole very seldom think of Him. Most in a conventional way accept Him as God who came to earth. They *never* discuss the question or argue about it. I think that many have a

superstitious awe of the Name (while many others use it foully and blasphemously amidst language of the vilest kind). But I feel certain that few men know Christ as a perfect man—complete in courage, love and goodness. There is, I think, a feeling that His doctrines, and therefore He Himself, are rather womanly. The teaching about humility, ‘turning the other cheek,’ meekness, etc., seems distinctly weak and womanly. These virtues are recognised and respected in those who have them, but for the ‘average’ man to adopt them would be a weakening of character. They never worry about the dogmatic doctrines concerning His birth, death, resurrection, etc., though these are *real* difficulties for many. They feel such questions are beyond them.”

From a staff chaplain of experience: “I think the appeal of Jesus is seriously hindered by the unreality and sentimentality of our traditional presentation. He remains remote, until we can show that the ideals of the average man are summed up and perfected in Him.”

From an ex-minister and officer with a West Country regiment: “What do they think of Jesus Christ? Their ideas are vague, few, and of little import. They believe that He lived, and was the essence of all that is kind, good and just, but a trifle soft. The Virgin birth they think a kind of made-up story. The death of Christ means as little to them as the death of Socrates.”

But while this jarring note is heard in our evidence, the greatly prevailing tone of it is that the human character of Jesus is generally regarded as the ideal of

humanity. The great difficulty is not that it is imperfect, but that it is impracticable and unattainable.

But when we come to the deeper truths about our Lord, we find that the almost universal testimony is that they are simply not in possession of the soldier's mind.

How are they to learn them ? A chaplain of experience writes : " Men need a religion which is both simple and practical, they need a power in their lives from an outside source—and *they know it*. It is possible to grip the attention of every man at some great parade service—which most men resent being forced to attend—when the speaker maintains that such a power does exist, that it is able to raise a man from his past and make him what he longs to be. The difficulty lies in explaining in a sufficiently simple and practical way how this power is found in Jesus Christ, and how Christ can become a power in his own life. He needs the expression the power of Christ explained in a way he can understand and apply in times of temptation, and in his daily work. This cannot be done by telling him " to have faith," that he must be " saved and born again," that he must " come to Christ," have " faith in the Name," and so on. He has not the foggiest notion as to what that sort of thing means.

" He will, however, slowly but surely respond when he begins to learn that he is of great value in God's sight, that Jesus came to tell him so. That Jesus is alive and is always close beside him (he knows the value of comradeship and good company), that Jesus has a special piece of work for him to do, and desires to use that gift of leadership, organisation, popularity, perseverance,

personality, which he is proud of and knows he possesses. He is not particularly interested in saving his own soul, but likes the idea that he could be of use to God and to his fellow men. He is honestly surprised to hear God needs his help, and to learn there is something positive in religion ; he had always thought that it was entirely a matter of negatives.

“ In the *presence* of Christ, realising that Christ is *using* him and is *trusting* him, that if he fails it will hurt and disappoint One who cares for him more than his own mother does, he discovers that the power of Christ is not magic, but works in a way he can understand and apply.

“ But as at present he knows nothing whatever about all this, he has to be taught, and before he is willing to learn he intends observing how it works out in the life of the teacher. For when all is said and done the only way to win a man for Christ is to *be* a man of Christ.”

### *The Cross.*

When we turn from the life of Jesus to His death, and ask how the men regard the Cross of Christ, we find a new appreciation of its marvel, but the same dimness of apprehension as to its deeper meaning. It is clear that before the war it must have had little meaning for them, except as part of the unintelligible and, as they thought, antiquated symbolism of the Church. But suddenly it has crossed their path, and has won a strange new meaning for them, a meaning thrilling with memories of pain and honour and faithful love. It is safe to say that when preachers speak to them henceforward about the Cross



of Christ, the word will have a depth and wealth of meaning associated with it which it had not in the world of commonplace daily toil or daily pleasure. More than this we cannot say. Our evidence certainly tends to show that to many of the soldiers the Cross has no meaning other than as a symbol of self-sacrifice.

In the main, there seems no clear linking up of this symbol of their own sacrifice with the sacrifice of Christ. How can there be, when their knowledge of Him as more than a man who lived far back in history is so limited and confused? A report from one of the great bases in France brings out this point: "To many Christ is too vague and distant a figure to be of any real appeal. The majority do not reckon with Him. Many seem to have a high ideal of Him as a man, but fail to recognise His redemptive work. As a man, Christ appeals; but they have no concern with the Incarnation and the Atonement."

In the same strain, a private writes: "Men know little of the Cross, even though they are bearing it in a sense never known before. They never or seldom think of Calvary; when they do, it seems quite unreasonable and incomprehensible that by a man dying on a gibbet two thousand years ago they of to-day can be saved. In fact, they do not rightly know what being saved means. They can understand conversion, but the blotting out, the absolution, of the past is a mystery. They do not believe as a whole in a devil, but evil is a mystery to them. It is an influence to be shaken off and rejected."

There is no clear sign that as yet the men have brought together their thought of Almighty God and

✓ the Cross ; there is no clear faith that the Cross in truth reveals His nature. There was much, indeed, in the tremendous ruin around them that seemed to thunder denial, and to awaken in a few men a certain bitter and cynical reaction. Speaking of this type, a private in a New Zealand regiment writes : "The Cross becomes almost a joke to him. At every cross-road and prominent building and church he sees crucifixes, and some of them prostrate from shell-fire. Yes, these crucifixes, emblems of the Cross of Christ, may arrest his attention when first he meets them, but how helpless they are ! They are not immune against high explosives, and though only symbols, the reality they are supposed to represent seems to have no bearing on our present circumstances."

But far more commonly the reaction is the other way. The Cross is at least beginning to reveal its deeper meaning to them, drawing many of them with a strange power. There is little sign, as has been said, of any clear conviction, but there is certainly in many a new sense of the depth and beauty of the message of the Cross.

An officer writes : " Men have noticed the crucifixes they have passed in France. It is a symbol which they like. It bears possibilities. Not much is yet attached to it, but it is the Crucified Christ rather than the Risen Christ which appeals."

From an Assistant Chaplain-General at a great French base : " The appeal of the Cross is very strong, but not on its redemptive side. The attraction of the Cross is that in the main of a wounded hero, a fellow-sufferer in a good cause. Probably we chaplains ought



to have done far more than we have to link this up with the Atonement; the thought of 'Christ's wounds' means a lot to a wounded man. The sympathy, in its literal sense, of the Christ soothes a wounded man's spirit more than anything I know."

From a chaplain with hospital experience: "The Cross is less talked about than prayer and the Life to come, except that men often mention the French crucifixes, to which they have no dogmatic aversion. I think that this is largely due to reverence, and that though men do not even try to understand the Cross it still challenges them. Pictures of the Cross appeal to them. Many bring back little crucifixes as souvenirs. I always find that men respond easily to ideas about the Cross."

From a chaplain with hospital experience: "The fact that Christ suffered has meant no end to lots of men in pain."

From a minister, a hut worker at a French base: "The Cross, as the utmost expression of devotion to others, has a strong appeal. But the revivalist's crude evangelical way of putting it soon puts more thoughtful men out of *rapport*."

From a sergeant in the R.A.M.C., with wide general experience, hospital, base, and line: "The Cross. What could not the Churches do for the world, if they could only connect the symbols Christ gave us with the knowledge that is within the hearts of the people? There must be more known about suffering and sacrifice now in the hearts of men than at any past time, but it is all isolated, disconnected, hidden out of sight."

He follows this with a criticism of obsolete theories

of the Atonement, and continues : “ But the instinct of self-sacrifice is one of the best and one of the commonest instincts in men, and the Church does right to sanctify it. It forms a root part of Christianity. I heard once a remarkable illustration of this. While on duty with gas patients I had occasion to speak to a friend of mine, a sergeant in the Regulars, an R.A.M.C. man, who had seen disease and death in many camps, about a crowd of gas patients—they suffer a prolonged drowning that lasts for twenty-four hours sometimes before they die. I was surprised to see this veteran deeply moved. ‘ This sort of thing,’ said he, ‘ makes me want to suffer everything for everyone once and get it over.’ Sergeant C. was not very religious or thoughtful, yet he had expressed in a few words the Christian instinct of ‘ greater Love.’ But willingness to be sacrificed in a cause does not prove the cause to be a right one. The cult of sacrifice is near idolatry. I have heard a minister say that each soldier killed or dying of wounds is as true a sacrifice for his dear ones as Christ’s on Calvary. That is simply untrue. A man enlisting because his pals enlist, living a life totally undeveloped in mind, occupied day by day as the life demands, with continual petty tasks and interests, unconscious of and therefore indifferent to the religious life, dies on the field or in hospital as indifferent as he lived. Most of the many deaths I have seen were as the deaths of children, indifferent. To say that such a man was a sacrifice to anything but the race instinct that made him fight for England, as his counterparts in Germany fight on the other side, is untrue. To say that that sacrifice is equal to the sacrifice of an

intelligence such as our Lord's—after hard labour of mind, highly discriminating, highly individual, revolutionary and subversive to all so-called national 'interests'—is to degrade and cheapen all our Christian standards."

Side by side with this estimate may be set this opposite view from an officer in a Highland regiment. After stating that the conventional religion in which the men have been brought up has failed them in their hour of need, he continues: "This is all the more remarkable when we recollect that our war in its deeper issues is being waged round the validity of the social ethic of Christianity. The Kaiser's Ultimatums were a challenge to the Cross. This widely recognised fact has invested our campaigns with the character of a crusade. One of its finest expressions was the famous cartoon in *Punch* which represents the Kaiser face to face with a Belgian crucifix. Indeed it was this, rather than any narrower patriotism, which brought these very soldiers in thousands to the colours and which holds them firm at heart to-day. I offer no solution of the paradox, yet it may be concluded that our soldiers' quarrel is not with Christianity itself, but with the dispirited forms which are offered to us in our churches and our theologies."

From a great Home base: "The fellowship of Christ's sufferings has had a new meaning for thousands, bringing them close to 'the Cross and the heart of God from Eternity.'"

Speaking of the influence of the Cross upon those who believe in it, a sergeant in the A.S.C. says: "The Cross made it possible for one to go on, as one felt it

was worth while if God could suffer and die for all this sin."

From a chaplain with a North of England regiment (miners): "As I have suggested, Christ still retains the homage of the men, only it is vague and instinctive rather than clear and intelligent. Is it, however, optimistic to believe that the crucified Christ will win a new and fuller allegiance from those who have sweated blood in the modern Gethsemane of mankind? There are dangers in the parallel; but at all events it is a way of approach."

From a major of artillery: "The Cross is becoming dimly understood by an increasing number from a new point of view. There is much need for the best preaching from chaplains on this great matter, avoiding at any cost all flattering of the men."

From a chaplain of extensive hospital experience: "No doubt the sight of so many crucifixes has impressed them. The wearing of crosses is often looked upon as a charm and the crucifixes as mascots, for the want of proper teaching. But there is certainly a groping after something. This is often starved out after return to England. Their minds are very open to teaching about the Cross and sacrifice."

### *The Living Christ.*

Of Jesus Christ as a living personality, who gives power to those who follow Him through the Holy Spirit, they know next to nothing at all. There is, perhaps, no more startling feature in the entire range of the evidence. It is not too much to say that this

great multitude of men, representing, according to the general drift of our witnesses more than four-fifths of the younger manhood of the nation in the armies, do not seem to have so much as heard that there is a Holy Spirit through whom they may know the presence of Christ. Or if they have heard, they have not understood. That that Spirit is at work within them we believe, but they do not know it at all. Let us hear the evidence. It will be remembered that a question was put raising the point explicitly. We shall, in this case, put the whole of the material bearing upon it now before our readers.

From a report of six chaplains, Midland hospitals : "They reverence Christ, but do not regard Him as living. The Living Christ is even less realised than the Cross."

From a gunner : "Men look on Christ as an historical figure, not as a living and present redeemer."

From an officer who has had ten years' service : "The Living Christ is a mere phrase to the men."

From a chaplain who has been for two and a half years with North of England troops, from mining classes : "I fear that apart from what the padre may say on Sunday, with the exception of the Christians, He does not figure in their lives at all. The Cross and the Living Christ for the keen Christian man mean everything—for the semi-keen, something—for the rest, nothing. . . . Keen 10 per cent., semi-keen 10 per cent., rest 80 per cent."

From a chaplain, hospital experience : "The soldier has profound respect for Jesus. Quotation from His teaching is accepted in most circles as the last word in



an argument. Faith in a Living Christ is rare, but wonderfully beautiful when it exists."

From a private: "To the majority the phrases 'the Kingdom of God' and 'the Living Christ' have little meaning."

From a private in a New Zealand regiment: "To the man who is not a Christian it seems that if Christ is living He has lost interest in the welfare of men and the world."

From a chaplain, afterwards Religious Director of the Y.M.C.A. at one of the great bases: "I think that the Friend Unseen is coming nearer to many, but I do not think that many soldiers would understand the name, 'the Living Christ.'"

From a private in the R.A.M.C.: "The Living Christ? They think He has gone back to Heaven, where He looks down and knows all that is going on down here. They do not know of the Church as His body, or of the Spirit in whose power He is with us to the end."

From a senior chaplain in a military hospital: "I am sorry to say that many of the men do not think of the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, but as a very good man who lived hundreds of years ago. They do not seem to think of Him as a Living Christ."

From a chaplain with a West of Scotland regiment (city): "The Living Christ—I cannot recall anything said to me on this point. The men admire Christ with a fine thoroughness, but I never heard them mention His living presence. And yet I think a good number of men have found that He is willing to be with them all the time. I think so, but I have no evidence."



This verdict is nearly unanimous. Two exceptions may be quoted. A chaplain with a Scottish battalion, enlisted at the beginning of the war, writes: "The war has made them think of Christ, not as an adjunct to Churches, as a member of Church Boards, as a spiritual chief constable, but as the Comrade of the camps, the Friend in agonies and sorrows of the hospital, the actual uplifter and saviour of men. That surely brings them within touch of Christ."

Here again is a quotation from a very judicial and able report from one of the bases: "The name of Christ enters into a great deal of profane speech. Many, however, are reticent and reverent about Him. They do not doubt His being alive and able to save, even if they have not realised the living and intimate union that is possible between Him and the individual soul. They are drawn to Him by His fellowship in temptation, and suffering, and death. . . . To speak generally, the facts of the Gospel narratives are not disputed, and Christ represents God in all their thinking about divine things. The doctrine of His divinity is not a stumbling-block in the men's religion to-day."

But the same report continues: "The majority do not seem to think of religion at all."

It will be noted that the above paragraph refers to "many." The writer seems to mean those who are genuinely interested, whether believers or not, in spiritual things.

The practical religion of these men, so far as it is operative at all, is a kind of vague theism, what one of our witnesses has called "a blind, incoherent faith in a great unseen benevolence." It is thus in a measure

suffused with Christian elements, but in the main God and Christ are severed in their minds. Between the God whom some of them have learned to know in the trenches, and Jesus of Nazareth there is a great gulf fixed. Of course there are all shades of difference between this and the experience of the sincere Christian soldier, to which we shall refer later. It is impossible to find any single formula to describe the great confused spectrum of the Army's thoughts about Christ. The confusion is to some extent mirrored in the evidence which we have cited, but the general drift of it is clear. The prevailing humanitarian view of Christ does not seem to be due to any reasoned conviction that modern scientific thought has made the traditional view of the Incarnation incredible. It is even doubtful if most of the men of whom we are thinking would understand without explanation what the term Incarnation means. We are told by nearly all our witnesses that intellectual difficulties do not trouble most of the men at all. The great majority of them have certainly learned the traditional teaching about the God-man in their boyhood and have accepted it in an external way. But as it had no lodgment in their living consciousness it has gradually faded out of their lives. They did not need it for the life they were living, and so it became atrophied and has fallen away. But memories of the human Jesus, of Him who walked in Galilee and blessed little children, and healed the sick, and spoke the Sermon on the Mount, have been unforgettable. They remember these things as they remember the hymns of their childhood about Him, and the pictures of Him that they have seen. They remember His

manhood, though they seem to have forgotten His divinity. Indeed, where residues of belief in this remain, they often seem a hindrance rather than a help.

On this matter an officer writes : " It is hard to say exactly what appeal the personality of Christ makes to the average man who is not a professed Christian in the best sense. I should think that frequently it is so glazed over with an atmosphere so foreign to it that it simply does not count for anything with them."

A report from a foreign camp confirms this. It says : " As a man, Christ appeals. But they have no conception of the Incarnation and Atonement. . . . All the metaphysical and theological problems which circle around Christ are to them unnecessary and perplexing talk."

An excellent witness, a non-commissioned officer, bears out this view, that what we have to deal with here is really a decaying and formal traditionalism. " There are few men who will say outright that they disbelieve in Jesus. Some say He was the creator of a set of high and noble ideals in life, and many do believe that He rose from the dead, but they do not truly realise the meaning and the sacrifice of Calvary and the Resurrection, and therefore cannot apply them to their daily life. They are just mere historical facts. There is really so little manifested faith in the fact that He lived, died, and lived again for us individually that we might not die!" There is therefore no idea of Christianity as moral power. " Consequently, this state of things has brought with it in attendance a low state of morality, especially regarding women."

A private in the R.A.M.C. writes : “ Few *know* God or realise that He is our Father, Brother, Sanctifier, Saviour. He is not in the least a personal Being to many. Most, I think, unconsciously regard Him as a First Cause, a great Autocrat, sitting among the stars ; He is believed by Christians and theologians to have come down to earth for a number of years—was born in a wonderful way, angels sang in the air, wise men came from an indefinite somewhere known as ‘ the East.’ He worked some wonderful miracles, at any rate the Bible says so, but many scientists and clever atheists say the Bible is based on mere legends, and is full of ‘ tall yarns ’ ; then He died to save me from my sins—which is quite beyond me ; how could He save me from my sins—rose again, went to heaven and has never been seen since. A Holy Ghost came at Whitsunday, and since then we have seen nothing in that line—and those things happened so long ago, and there is so little about them in history books other than the Bible, and we have heard of other stories of that kind, other people working miracles, etc., that it is quite doubtful whether it is true or not.”

Of course, in this spectrum, as in the one last examined, there are all shades. At the one end we have the sincere and consistent Christian believer. It is the general report that a genuine Christian man is greatly respected, which is a pretty clear indication that in their hearts the men recognise the Christian standards as the best.

“ Of course in saying these things,” writes a private with the Salonika forces, “ I only speak of the majority ; there are many who are Christians in truth, many who



would say that Jesus Christ is the greatest of living realities to-day. On the inestimable value of these men in uplifting the life and tone of the camps I need not dwell. They are the most respected men in the place."

This latent respect for the Christian standard comes out negatively as criticism of Christians who fail to live up to it.

A sergeant writes : " While they will not be impressed by any particular form of religion, they have a deep admiration for our Divine Lord. They are much impressed by the Christian interpretation of the Christ-life, and are very ready to criticise if you come short of the great standard."

Here, as elsewhere throughout the evidence presented in this volume, we have steadily to keep before us the existence of the minority of believing men, relatively small, but absolutely large. We shall never get the whole situation intelligibly before us by thinking only, as we are apt to do, of the majority.

Our correspondents, for the most part, belong to this minority, and, as it is right they should, their main concern is with the great multitude. But here and there we get a glimpse like this of faith that is overcoming the world amid all the horrors of war. " On one occasion," writes a sergeant of the R.A.M.C., " I was bringing back a walking case. He could only just walk very slowly. The conversation turned on religion. He said to me that he believed in Christ, and hence had no fear. We were going through a barrage area, and as he spoke a shell fell within twenty feet of us. I know for a fact that he felt neither fear nor panic, and the conversation was not interrupted except for the putting up of his

coat collar against the clods of earth that fell upon us. We spent some time getting through the barrage, and he spoke the whole time in a quiet, unperturbed voice. Christ was to him a Reality."

And a chaplain writes: "I have known a few men who have taught me that understanding of and allegiance to Christ is the greatest hope of the world. . . . If a man is once constrained to follow Christ at all costs, he is curiously indifferent to the events of war."

These men come at one end of the spectrum.

Then comes the great mass who have, in varying degree, an external formal belief in the Divine Christ. The living part of their faith is really not the vague residuum of doctrinal belief that they were taught in childhood and in boyhood. This is so bleached and weathered that it hardly counts in the case of most. The really living thing is their reverence for the human Jesus. They do believe in the Man Christ Jesus. "They are always very anxious to tell you," writes an officer of an airmen's mess, "that they do not believe anything about Christ as the Churches taught, though they admit that they owe their religion to Him. Somehow the centre and core of religion are there. He stood for the fulness of man's stature and the greatness of God's Love."

Next to these come those who have clearly formulated their belief that He was nothing but a good man.

The spectrum does not deepen at the extreme end into any hostility. Of that there is no trace anywhere.

It is sad, however, to have to record that there is frequent mention in our testimony of the profane use of the great Name. "As to their opinion of Jesus



Christ it is very difficult to say. His name is only used as an oath."

"Well-known religious phrases, such as 'for Christ's sake,' beautiful as they are, must be scrapped owing to their having only a comic import to the average Tommy."

How are we to harmonise such a tragic statement as this with what does stand massively out from the evidence when all is said, that the great mass of the men have a sincere reverence for the Man Christ Jesus?

The two opposite things come into strange neighbourhood in a paragraph from a private of the R.A.M.C. which sums up much of what has been said and suggests more: "Generally speaking, they do not acknowledge the Divinity of Jesus Christ. This is largely due to the fact that they look on Christianity as an organised system rather than as truths or realities of which Jesus Christ is the centre. Jesus, to them, is more of a teacher, a perfect man, who preached impossible principles. Their discussion of Him is reverent, although in oaths His name is terribly prominent."

How are we to explain this strange psychological puzzle? One of our witnesses, an officer in a Dominion regiment, has his own explanation. "In my opinion the Christian religion means nothing to them. They seem to think that the Name of Jesus is a good one to swear with. This does not distress me in the least. I have long forsworn the name of Christian. It simply means that the Churches have so failed to make the world understand Him, that the Name means nothing. The use, herefore, loses nearly all its worst features."

This is surely a very questionable explanation. If the Name meant nothing, it would not be profanely used. The whole detestable habit of profanity has its source in the desire to be impressive, to make other people listen, and to assert oneself as having a bold and free spirit. In time it becomes not only a personal but a corporate habit, as it has become in the Army. But if the Name meant nothing it would never be used in profanity. Hence it is quite comprehensible how the men who have been using the Name profanely, without fully realising what they have been doing, should turn from it to reverent discussion. Of course, if the reverence were deep enough, and if the men realised what they were saying, there could be no profanity. But, as it is, it is best taken as partly a bad habit and partly a perverted witness to a real impression. A chaplain in a regiment consisting mainly of miners writes: "On the other hand, I found a spirit of reverence for Christ. It appeared, *e.g.*, thus: whenever I remonstrated on swearing generally, the men deferred to me as an officer, but when I rebuked them for misnaming Christ, the unanimous verdict was clearly and strongly on my side."

It must be clear from what has been said that it is high time that the Churches should resolutely set to work to clear out of the way the errors and misunderstandings that come between these men and Christ. It is intolerable that His humanity should be so veiled from them.

A Wesleyan chaplain writes: "The men largely miss Christ through lack of reliable information about Him."

A Presbyterian Chaplain, speaking of Scottish territorial troops, follows with this saying, which might be paralleled from many other witnesses: "I feel that the work before the Churches lies largely in the full interpretation of Christ to them."

There are many indications that a faithful preaching of Christ as the Giver of power to overcome temptation and to follow His teaching would meet with an overwhelming response. With two quotations in illustration of this point this chapter may close.

A hut worker of varied experience says: "The power and attraction of the Name of Jesus to arrest and hold and win its way in the very noisiest crowd have been demonstrated over and over again."

A major of artillery writes of a conversation with brother officers: "I ventured then to give the Churches' view of human nature as something that needed conversion and that could be converted. I got keen, and they listened almost eagerly as I gave them an outline of the Churches' idea of Christ from this point of view. The conversation reached its last phase with a very angry retort in these words: 'And when you go to Church the bloody thing they offer you is the most damned insipid thing imaginable.' Don't bother about the awful language. It was the tragic cry of a soul that had asked the Church for bread and had been given a stone."

## ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER IV

#### MISUNDERSTANDINGS

There is much real misunderstanding about Christianity which the Church ought to remove.

The evidence shows that the men have no clear idea of what Christianity is.

As to its ethical ideals, in the main they seem to think of the Christianity of the Churches as a system of negative commandments; there is also evidence that they regard *real* Christianity as a life of active good-will.

*Evidence*: Christianity regarded as negative rather than positive: men do not know what it is—does the Church?: revival of elemental religion makes old versions of Christianity more impossible than ever: the war has widened the gulf between the men and the Churches: they do not connect their religious emotions with Christianity: it does not appeal to the heroic in them: they do not see how it helps them to live better: men feel lack of positive force in the Church: Christ an unpractical dreamer.

The men do not seem to associate their new religious experiences nor the morality of love and sacrifice with the Christian religion.

There is an apparent counter-current in the evidence.

*Evidence*: Men do think of Christian life as a life of active good-will: distinction between Christianity and life of ordinary Church member.

They can distinguish between real and conventional Christianity, but as a rule take it at the conventional valuation.

If we believed that the Christian life was what they believe it to be, should we be Christians?

## CHAPTER IV

### MISUNDERSTANDINGS

FOR the practical purposes of our enquiry, the enlistment of the youth of our nation in the conscious and active service of the Kingdom of God, there is no part of this volume of more importance than the present chapter, which is an endeavour to set forth the men's ideal of what it is to be a Christian. But there is a prior and more general question. How far do they understand what Christianity really is? Surely this is a question that has to be answered before we can make real progress with our enquiry.

It is one of the central contentions of this volume that at the very bottom of the vast confusions of the present situation there is a very great amount of downright misunderstanding. If this contention can be established, then it will evidently be the Church's duty to remove those misconceptions that are responsible for so much loss and alienation. The conclusions, therefore, which we form at this stage must determine the whole of the later part of our inquiry.

Two questions were inserted in our list: "Have the men in general any clear idea of what Christianity



is ? ” and “ Do they think of the Christian life as the following of negative commandments, or as of a life of active good will ? ” The answers to the first question have been practically unanimous. They are all to the effect that the vast majority are in a condition of ignorance about the Christian religion. “ They have not the foggiest notion of what it is all about.” Thus, what was meant to be a solution of the riddle of life and death becomes little more than a new problem super-added to it. We shall make no headway whatever with the spiritual conquest of our nation for Christ and His Kingdom until we have allowed this tremendous fact to possess our consciousness, and to dominate our thoughts and plans for the future.

To the other question, which is mainly concerned with the *ethical ideals* of Christianity, the answer is at first sight more ambiguous. The greatly dominant stream of evidence is to the effect that in the main the men think of Christian morality mainly as a system of negative commandments. But side by side with this, and apparently running in a counter direction, is a fairly steady and persistent though narrower current of testimony that the men do look upon real Christianity as a life of active good will. The question, therefore, arises whether we have here such a conflict of evidence as one might naturally expect in so vast a whole. The truly surprising thing, as has been said more than once, is that to so very large an extent our witnesses all agree. We shall do well, therefore, in this particular case to leave this possibility of contradiction open, laying emphasis only upon the greatly preponderant weight of



testimony to a radical and disastrous misunderstanding.

We shall now set the evidence on both points in some detail before our readers, leaving them to form their own conclusion as to what that evidence means for the Churches and for themselves.

*The Main Current of the Evidence.*

From a report of six chaplains, Midland hospital experience : "Men have absolutely no clear conception of the Christian religion. The existing ideas have a purely traditional basis with little working power in life. . . .

"The Decalogue as interpreted by our Lord does not find complete acceptance as a general rule. The usual view regards Christianity as negative rather than positive. Many people who break the commandments are looked upon as good, whilst many who keep them are not accepted. Men accept good will and philanthropy as good things, but they fail to see anything of a Christian spirit in them, or any likeness to Christ in those who practise such works. They are greatly in need of a clearer presentation of Christ's spirit and life."

From the letter of an Assistant Chaplain-General : "The intellectual side is sorely needed. Men must think—getting past the queer sensation thinking sets up in Englishmen. They must dig in that strange field of Christianity (*i.e.* the mind of the men) as it has come down to us, digging through its odd, in part misleading, in part repellent surface—it is a mosaic of kill-joyism and Balaam's ass's ears, and Noah, and

mothers' meetings, and Athanasian damns, and the Archbishop of Canterbury at £15,000 a year—through the films of childish misunderstandings and prejudices—through to the *treasure*. Yes, without some mental digging men will not be built up in the faith, and will not grow in knowledge. There is a wonderful treasure there, but, if they will not mete to it a bit of sweat in digging, it cannot be meted to them."

From an officer in a Highland regiment: "To my mind the only difficulty is that the majority have not the foggiest notion of what Christianity is all about; their opposition to it is emotional and instinctive, not reasoned. Perhaps because Christianity is expressed in a form they think insincere (*e.g.*, it has a language of its own not readily understood by the outsider), and it is bound up with a social system they dislike. . . .

"They do not know what Christianity is. And after all, what is it? Does the Church know? A very general idea finds the symbol of Christianity in a fussy old lady asking the wounded soldier, 'Do they *really* give the poor men in the trenches rum to drink?' (They resent this frightfully because it makes children of them). . . .

"The war has changed the men radically; but they are not too conscious of the change. It has not made them think more deeply. On the contrary, it has made them place thinking below emotion and instinct. The war seems to have revived something ancestral in these men—something elementally religious. This has made it even more impossible for them to harbour the old popular versions of Christianity (taboo), etc., but

rendered them far more open to vital religion. The appeal must be chivalrous, spiritual, possessed of a driving emotion (but *not* sentimental) ; *e.g.*, you mention as a point 'the value of prayer.' That is wrong. The vast majority have learned the *human necessity* of prayer in certain circumstances. It would be fatal to urge prayer upon them as a thing with an efficiency value. Show it them as an inherent part of vital activity. Yet I imagine *that* is a point where many of the "heathen" among them could teach the Church.

"What the Church has to do is to show these men that the religious emotion and outlook they have discovered is Christianity in embryo. *It is* ; but it has very little in common with the Christianity presented to the man in the street by the practice of the Churches. I endorse entirely the statement that 'The soldier has got religion, but not Christianity,' only I think it is badly put. What he has 'got' has been there all the time. It has merely been laid bare ; and it is as primitive almost as Animism.

"The war has undoubtedly widened the gulf between the men and the Churches. They think the latter utterly divorced from real life. The great fact which has been burned into my mind is that, while almost every man goes through times of intense religious emotion in the trenches, very few seem to have the faintest conception that the emotion which has gripped them has anything to do with Christianity. This is a terrible indictment of the Church. The *religious* men whom I have met in the Army have been almost entirely men with a strong point of view of their own, usually unorthodox and reformatory."

From a lady hut worker in one of the great bases in France : " As to the moral standards in which they really believe,—they will generally uphold all the more active and strenuous of the Christian virtues. I think Donald Hankey is a safe guide as to their moral ideals. They admire courage and endurance, they admire good-fellowship and sticking to a pal ; they admire generosity and anyone who does his bit and a good deal over. They admire the officer ' who does not mind taking off his coat and working alongside of the rest of us.' They admire the man who, if he is a Christian, sticks to his guns and is consistent (but they insist on consistency). They admire the man who does not put on side, and they are very modest about their own achievements ; therefore one may say they admire humility, though they certainly would not own to it, and in general do not admire the more passive of the Christian virtues.

" In practice they shine in patience, consideration for other people, in courage to the point of *insouciance* in cheeriness (they do ' put their troubles in their old kit-bag '). But they break down under temptation to drink and other forms of vice, and they lack courage to stand out against a crowd. (I am generalising wildly ; there are many exceptions.)

" But the big difficulty, as Neville Talbot and others point out, is to get them to connect their ideals with their Christianity, if they have any. They do not see that Christ is the source of most of their ideals, and they do not think that Christianity has anything to say on the points that really interest them.

" On the one hand they are not attracted to Chris-



tianity, because it fails to make an appeal to the heroic and self-sacrificing in them. If Christianity could really seize their imaginations as a 'crusade' against all the things they most detest, and a 'crusade' for which they are called to lay down everything, as God Himself gives everything,—but they have not the least that idea.

“On the other hand, they *do* think it is difficult to be a Christian, but there is nothing positive in what Christ asks of them, as they conceive it. Their idea is that a Christian man must not drink, must not swear, must not (according to some authorities) smoke, must not grumble, and must not amuse himself; as to positive duties, he *must* go to church. It is a good thing that they think it is difficult to be a Christian, but it is a pity that so negative a programme should be presented to them, and that all the positive glory of winning the world for Christ, or dying in the attempt, should be hid from their eyes. We have got to connect the programme of the Church with their social ideals and programmes.”

From a missionary working with British troops in India: “Yes, all think religion is a negative thing, even churchgoers. This is largely due to the Ten Commandments being read at the chief Sacrament. Why not always substitute our Master's positive commands?”

From an officer with an Ulster regiment: “I honestly do not think that there are difficulties in the way of belief which are of any importance; the trouble lies in the fact that men do not understand the value of belief. Christianity has been preached to them so long as a

belief in certain doctrines and the performance of certain rituals that they cannot see beyond these, and do not grasp how this is going to help them to live any better, or to make them any more ready to die. . . .

“They have, generally speaking, a very crude idea of Christianity, more or less the schoolboy’s belief in what he has been taught, with morality appearing as a more or less necessary evil, which prevents one doing many otherwise very pleasant things. The doctrine of Love, I am afraid, is not grasped at all.”

From a corporal in the R.F.A. : “The general idea of Christianity is that it consists of a number of negative commandments. This is more or less aided by military discipline, which in France especially is one long series of *Thou Shalt Nots*. This is so very like the general idea of Christianity, and few realise the greater duty of active goodness. By this I do not wish to infer that soldiers do not do any good actions, that would be untrue, but it is generally regarded as doing the straight thing, not so much a good turn, and to suggest it was a Christian act would be instantly denied.”

From a private in the R.A.M.C. : “Their idea of a Christian life is greatly at fault. To them a Christian is a church-goer, a man who prays, who reads his Bible and generally lives a meek, inoffensive sort of life and believes he goes to Heaven when he dies.

“To the man who has this idea of a Christian, it means life with all pleasure, pure and otherwise, crossed out, with the words ‘Thou shalt not.’

“If I may be permitted at this point I would say that



this fact has puzzled me constantly since I joined the Army."

From a chaplain, formerly hut worker at a base in France : " All men seem somewhere to feel the lack of positive force in the Church. A man does not drink, does not smoke, does not swear, so he is a keen Christian. A man is unselfish, generous, self-sacrificing, loving and loyal, he is not necessarily a Christian at all. These are not the ' Christian ' virtues, but the human."

From a nurse who has served in three English hospitals : " The hindrances which keep the men from Church are mainly, I think, these :

" Church does not make them any better. This comes from their view of Christianity. They regard it as a series of negative laws—not a life in communion with a Person. This is the whole fault and the groundwork of nearly every evil. Christianity seems hardly ever to be presented in this light (and whatever is the good of it if it is not ?)—consequently in going to church the men see no *obligation* to a *Person* apart from their own selves."

From a staff officer in the Engineers : " Such thought as there is on religious subjects is usually very superficial, and there is little or no serious reading ever done in such subjects. The general result of all this is a totally false or inadequate conception of what the Christian Religion is, which is mainly thought of as a number of negations, often of what is their one and only source of pleasure. Further, although they admire and respect our Lord His Life and Example, it is usually looked upon as absolutely unpractical, unattainable by men in this life, and He himself an unpractical

dreamer and lacking in very many of the manly qualities which we admire so much among our fellow men. The essentially *manly*, chivalrous, good-natured, muscular, courageous and brave side of His nature is not appreciated."

These testimonies might be very greatly multiplied, but they are taken as representing the rest. Let us clinch them with a picture from the field, which may well be set alongside the second of the testimonies quoted above. From a major of Artillery: "It was a wet, cold morning, about 6 a.m. in winter, on the Somme. I saw half a dozen of my boys taking charge of two infantrymen at their last gasp from wet, mud, fatigue, and exposure. The poor fellows had actually lain down to die on the roadside by our battery. My men gave them their breakfast (we were short of rations in those days), their socks (we were short of these), shirts and everything; and rubbed them and lit fires all round them, and sweated over them, and got them to hospital. Now they would be utterly surprised to hear that any of this had got to do with morality or religion. Morality has to do with not breaking laws."

If these two witnesses are right, if the men associate neither the new religious experiences which have come to them in the field nor the morality of love and sacrifice with the Christian religion as they understand it, surely we have the proof of some deep and strange misunderstanding. It may be that the germ of all future progress in the religion and morality of the future, the germ, too, of the solution of that great problem which we are considering in these pages, lies here.

*The Counter-current.*

It was said at the beginning of this chapter that there was an apparent counter-current to the great preponderance of the evidence. It will be noted that this contrary evidence relates to the *ethical* ideals of Christianity. The evidence as to this ignorance of the real meaning of Christian *doctrine* is unbroken. Let us hear one or two of these testimonies.

From a chaplain with a Highland regiment, formerly a combatant: "Have the men any clear idea of what the Christian religion is? No; amazingly no. Has the Church? Has the average divinity student or young minister with little or no experience of men? I do not find many who think of the Christian life as following negative commandments. They are much nearer the other point of view, that it is a life of good will. They want that. They think *very* highly of Jesus Christ. That is one of the impressive things; though they mind less whether He actually did miracles or whether they understand all He said."

From a lance-corporal in the Royal Engineers: "They have a very clear idea of what Christ demands of men. A life of active good will is their standard. I have yet to meet the soldier who found fault with Him or His teaching as read."

From a gunner: "Many men have a clear idea of what the Christian religion consists in, although they do not realise the great responsibility that rests on those who call themselves Christians. They will recognise a breach in the commandments, but they will often overlook the real teaching."

From an officer of the A.S.C.: "We believe many

have quite a clear idea of what the Christian religion is and means, but we feel the example of Christ so unapproachable, especially at the present time."

Our two next witnesses make a distinction between Christ and the Church which may explain the apparent difference.

From a chaplain with a Highland regiment (city): "Do they think of the Christian life as following a number of negative commandments? I am not so sure. They certainly think that the life of the ordinary Church member involves submission to a number of negative precepts. That is what repels them in it. But I also think that the idea is pretty common to-day that the religion of the ordinary Church member is not Christianity. I feel sure they have dimly realised that Jesus stood for something far fuller and greater and happier than mere submission to negative precepts."

From a chaplain of experience in France: "Christianity is judged primarily by the lives of professing Christians. Institutional religion was widely identified with respectability and a negative code, but a generous or unselfish act was often called 'really Christian.' There is a cleavage between this 'really Christian' life and the observance of institutional religion which corresponds unhappily with our average practice.

"There were, of course, many individuals with intellectual difficulties, but the great majority had never found themselves compelled to reckon with religion at all, had never been startled by any marked difference in positive and generous virtue in the lives of professing Christians. It had not struck them that Christians



were different, and differed because they possess a special power . . . . All sorts of causes combined to produce this . . . but above all the poverty of the general Christian witness. 'The salt has lost its savour.' "

It is quite clear that the misleading idea of Christianity as consisting in prohibitions and negatives rather than in an energy of love and good will is derived not from the sacred writings, of which most of them are very ignorant, but from what they have observed or believed that they have observed of the lives of Christians. They say that they see no difference as regards this positive energy of goodness between the people who go to church and profess themselves to be Christians and those who do not. The only distinguishing marks for them are the negative marks, that the church-going public keeps the Ten Commandments, and has as its outstanding positive virtue the fact that it does go to church.

Now, all this is, no doubt, very unjust, but it is well that we should know it and lay the matter to heart.

There is abundant evidence in the papers, however, that the men recognise and admire real, consistent Christianity whenever they see it. On the surface there seems to be a contradiction here. But is it really so? A man has on the walls of a little used room in his house a bad reproduction of a great picture. That picture he has never seen, and, thinking of it in terms of that copy, he has no great desire to see it. But some one gives him a better copy, and at once he says, "That must be like the real thing." The misunderstanding is not radical enough to have destroyed this

power of recognition. So these men do distinguish between real Christianity and conventional Christianity when they give any serious thought to the matter or when they are challenged. But they are willing to take Christianity, as a rule, as being what they think its official representatives believe it to be, and taken at that valuation, it does not attract them.

What is surely wanted to retrieve this disastrous misunderstanding is a great re-awakening of the Christian spirit of love and fellowship, of that energy of good will and gladness and hope which is the very spirit of Jesus. Such a re-birth of the spirit would give wings to the preaching of the Evangel, would reveal to the men that Christ has been with them in Flanders, would draw them into the Church's fellowship in great numbers, and would lift them out of that hopeless acceptance of servitude to the flesh which is the great tragedy of these heroic years.

Meantime we may sum up this chapter by pressing for an answer to the question, If we believed that the Christian life was what these men believe it to be, should we be Christians?



# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER V

### MATERIALISM AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The men as a whole take a material, not a spiritual, view of life. But there is a counter-current of testimony.

There seems to be a crust of materialism over depths of idealism and religion, which are revealed in great experiences. The crust must not be allowed to harden again.

What is the real *nature* of the so-called materialism ?

(1) "The natural heart of man"—but we have learnt that the average man is nobler than we knew.

(2) The character of their education.

(3) The war environment.

(4) The social environment in which they have grown up.

*Evidence* : The effect of the social order has been to make them think material success the chief aim in life : Question of money terribly present to weekly wage-earners.

The recognition of the evil effects of the social environment commits us to attempting its reformation.

## CHAPTER V

### MATERIALISM AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

THE greatly prevailing drift of the evidence is that the men as a whole take a material view of life. Some definition of what this means is at this point essential. Our meaning is not that they are theoretic materialists. All our accounts go to show that these are relatively very few indeed. As we have seen, there is, deep in the consciousness of nearly all, a belief in God, and a faith that life continues beyond the grave. Moreover, the almost universal resort to prayer in time of danger shows a faith, however dim, that this God really controls the world. All these faiths are, of course, impossible to a true materialist.

But it is true that, under the present conditions, the men prevailingly appear to take a material as opposed to a spiritual view of life. In spite of all that has been said of the experiences of the Line, it would be a great misunderstanding of the situation to think of the mass of men as preoccupied with religion. This is what has made the highly-coloured pictures of a "revival of religion at the Front" so untrue and so pernicious. If we are basing our hopes for religion in the future on the idea that the men are going to set the Churches on fire with a new zeal for

religion, we shall assuredly be disappointed. There will be a new and wonderful opportunity for reaching and deeply moving these men, which the Churches may see and use, but it is highly doubtful if there will be more. For our witnesses generally testify that, to all appearances, material interests have everywhere seemed to prevail over spiritual.

Now there is no doubt that to a certain extent this has to be discounted. It is wholly antipathetic to our national temperament to speak much about sacred or ideal things. And, as one of our correspondents writes, "the British soldier is a shy bird." Ask one of the earlier armies why he enlisted, and he will look foolish, or give some obviously superficial reason. But this, while it has to be allowed for, does not account for what so many first-hand witnesses tell us—for the testimony of officers as to those with whom for years they have been in closest contact, of nurses watching by the wounded and overhearing the talk of the wards, of chaplains who have "made good" with their men.

On the other hand, there is a counter-current of testimony not to be lightly treated, which if it is to be rightly appraised ought to be taken in connection with what has been already said as to the great virtues which the men have shown in their time of trial, such as sacrifice, comradeship, endurance, humility, and intense love of home.

How are we to explain this apparent conflict of views? Partly, no doubt, the immensely varied area of the field accounts for it. But in the main one gets the impression that there lies on the mind of the

young manhood of our country a hard crust of materialism, beneath which there are great depths of idealism, of humanity, and of religion. The crust is strained and broken in great experiences. There comes to them some drastic summons to heroic sacrifice and daring, and in response to it there is an upheaval of latent spiritual power, and for the moment the commonplace, pleasure-loving man becomes a hero. He gives his life away for a spiritual end. Or the overwhelming powers of the destroying world break in upon him, and for the moment the crust breaks again. The man's need drives him to God. He prays. But when the demand for the heroic and the believing in him is removed, the old materialism closes in and thickens again. What makes this so vitally important for us all at home in the Churches is that, unless we realise it and prepare against it, something analogous will take place as soon as peace is finally declared and the great common strain is removed. What used to happen in individual cases when a man went from the line to the base is only too likely to occur when the common strain is removed in the case of all.

But this disastrous thing need not happen. For us to admit that it is inevitable would be to commit precisely the same error as is at the root of the whole mischief in the men themselves, would be to surrender hope through forgetting the unchanging nature of God. It is of capital importance at this stage, therefore, that we seek to understand the real nature of this so-called materialism in the men.

There are several elements in it. There is first "the natural heart of man." This is, in the main, the

explanation with which most of us were content before the war. But that vast apocalypse of grandeur and horror, with its revelation of the depths to which human nature can sink, has revealed to us also, as by a lightning flash, the heights to which it can rise, and made us feel that that explanation is all too simple to be completely true. For these potentialities must have been all there before ; and our new perception of this should lead to the faith that our common human nature, our average manhood, is higher and nobler than we knew. We have the new hope, in fact, that the apparently dense crust of materialism has in it something artificial and accidental as well as natural, something inhering in the conditions and in the environment in which these men have been trained, rather than in their essential nature.

A second cause is the character of the education which they have received. This has been determined, however defectively, in the main, by the desire to make them efficient in the economic struggle, *i.e.* it has been directed, primarily, to material ends. The ideal and religious side has obviously been too weak to balance this. This is dealt with elsewhere in this volume, alike in the evidential and practical chapters on education.

The third great cause of the practical materialism of the men must unquestionably be found in their immediate environment. This is dealt with in the next chapter on the "Moral Impact of the War," and we need only refer to it in this place.

The fourth great factor is the influence of the social environment in which these men have been



brought up. It has been truly said by a standard modern economist<sup>1</sup> that the two great agencies which mould men are the religious and the economic, their idea of God, and the way in which they earn their daily bread. We have seen that, in the upbringing of these men, the religious factor has been relatively weak. What of the economic order of society in which they have been reared? This will be more fully discussed later. Meantime we must note it, and hear what some of our observers have to say of it.

From a nurse (two and a half years' experience with men mainly from industrial regions): "The majority of men think very little about religion: if they think at all, it is of something for the trenches, and not to be bothered about at any other time. They apparently take a very material view of life, the majority of them having been brought up to work hard for their living, and that seems to be their chief anxiety."

From a sergeant in the Rifle Brigade: "To me it seems that men, as a whole, take an almost entirely materialistic view of life and morality. This is due largely to their education, and also social surroundings. What is wanted is a standard for them to live up to and that standard explained to them. The religious standard is not plain to them and does not mean anything real to them. . . . Their social conditions need improving. Men must be made to feel that they are men and not machines."

From a nurse: "Having lost the conception of a spiritual life begun in Baptism, and nourished by the sacramental life in Christ, they have a very material

<sup>1</sup> Marshall's *Principles of Economics*.



outlook on life. The effect of the social order of which we are all a part gives them very often the idea that material success is the chief end in life."

From a chaplain with a West of Scotland (city) regiment :

"What does strike me, however, about nearly all the men and women of the working classes is that the question of money is terribly constantly present with them. It is an instinct with them to ask first, in view of any proposed change of occupation, 'What will it bring in?' Quite simply, they put the question of pay or wages in the forefront. When heavy bereavement falls on them, even then they think at once of how it will affect their pockets. The same question is uppermost when they are asked to let their sons go to the war. They are far more often angry with the Government for not dealing justly or quickly in the matter of allowances and pensions than because they have dragged the country into war. In talking about careers they do not consider the honour of them or the usefulness of them. They consider their worth from the point of view of what they will bring in. They always want to know about any prominent man who may seem to be doing good work, whether or no he makes a good thing of it. This is not true of the men who are above the level of weekly wage-earners, and even among the weekly wage-earners there are splendid exceptions. I had a servant for a long time who was losing £100 a year by serving in the Army, and yet he volunteered at the beginning without a thought.

"But even though this charge is true of the poorer

men *as a whole*, it does not mean that they really take a material view of life. It is the inevitable result of their position. They are so near the rocks always that they *have* to think constantly about ways and means. They know what a cruel and remorseless thing real poverty is, and they fear and dread it. They have no securities for the future, and the more they love their 'ain folk' the more do they think about the whole question. There is real pathos if not tragedy in this. For it is true that the finer elements in their natures have not had a real chance to grow owing to the constant presence of the economic factor in life."

From a second-lieutenant of two and-a-half years' service, first as private, and then as officer :

"Since returning to duty I have come into contact with the rank and file of the later conscripts, men of all classes, lacking the fire of the earlier recruits. . . . I cannot speak of the 'view of life' of these men. That would represent a degree of reflection to which they have never attained. I am convinced that the 'attitude' of these men before the war was pagan, without even those elements of dignity and beauty which are associated with paganism in certain of its developments. They took life as it came, life consisting of stretches of monotonous labour, broken by intervals of relief and recreation. These men never interpreted life into spiritual terms. How should they? Obviously life was chiefly an affair of dulness and injustice. All that could be hoped for was a moderate degree of comfort and occasional excitement in the way of sports, bean-feasts and holidays. . . . To summarise: *the condi-*

*tions of life* were those of the herd, ugly, sordid, and common, with no hope for individuality. *Education* failed to instil any conception of citizenship of the common good, and where it succeeded best it only aroused criticism and a sense of injustice ; Religion had no connection with life—no vital meaning.”

It may be asked, What is the point involved in the discussion of the causes of the material outlook of the men ? Is it not enough simply to note the fact ? No ; it is of critical importance that we should truly understand the malady with which we have to deal, if we really hope to cure it. It is of the utmost practical moment, whether we are to ascribe this materialism solely to the “ natural heart ” of man, or also to bad environment, whether that be educational or social. If we take the former view, we shall tend to be indifferent to the removal, say, of war, or the improvement of education. Why should we trouble ? —they are not the real seat of the evil at all. The evil is solely due to the fleshly nature of man. So runs the familiar argument. If, on the other hand, we give environment its due place, we are as Christians committed to its reformation, and if need be its revolution. We cannot be indifferent to a social environment that makes it difficult for men to believe in God. We shall rejoice to know that the converting power of God can break through any heredity, however strong it may be, and we shall seek for such miracles of His grace. But we shall labour and fight, also, for a civilisation which shall be worthier of human spirits for whom Christ died.<sup>1</sup>

. <sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV, Part II.

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MORAL IMPACT OF THE WAR

It is difficult to estimate the moral impact of the war. Some believe it has made little difference ; the majority say otherwise.

#### *I. Evil Effects.*

##### *(a) Strain.*

*Evidence :* Strain of war on mind and spirit : a hardening process, stunting the whole man, but necessary to self-preservation : fatigue of the soul.

A strong tendency to reaction will be bound to follow this.

*(b) Materialistic Environment.* There is general evidence that the men have learned to hate war.

*Evidence :* Army life kills thought and concentrates attention on the body : this produces craving for excitement—hence immorality, etc. : sordid atmosphere : material force predominant on battlefield and reality of God hard to realise : war accentuates animal nature : materialising influence of base camps : return to wholesome surroundings will largely counteract evil, but at certain points the moral level has sunk.

In warfare men are treated as things and tend to sink to that level.

#### *II. The brighter side.*

##### *(a) Humanity.*

*Evidence :* New sense of fellowship.

*(b) Broadening and Deepening Effect.* Life has become far more varied for many. The presence of danger has set many thinking.

*Evidence :* Men forced to think : despite evil effects, men on the whole more thoughtful and bigger.

*Conclusion.* The evidence shows how poorly equipped the men were spiritually and intellectually for the crisis. We must appeal to the many who will come out with a deepened faith. The final issue is not yet decided.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MORAL IMPACT OF THE WAR

WHAT does our evidence report as to the effect of the war upon the character of the men who have passed through the furnace? Or rather, what has been its tendency on their moral outlook? The evidence here is confusing and even contradictory, and has to be supplemented by what is said in other chapters of this section of our Report.

A few of our witnesses believe that the war has made but little difference.

The overwhelming trend of the evidence, however, sets in a different direction, and we have now to look into the general effect of the war environment upon the men and to consider how it has affected their outlook and conduct, and whether this effect is likely to be permanent.

#### I.

##### EVIL EFFECTS.

##### (a) *Strain.*

We shall take, first, the effect of prolonged and almost unendurable strain. This seems to us of first-rate importance for the period immediately following the war. A striking paper by a sergeant of the



R.A.M.C., of very wide and deep experience, has the following passage: "War, *when it continues over a long period*, makes for deterioration in vitality of each individual. The physical part suffers chiefly from two main things—shock and exhaustion. So in men's *minds*. The average man suffers chiefly from a cumulative nervous strain that would very soon drain his vitality away unless there is a process of compensation or hardening. This compensating process is simply a *lowering of consciousness* on all planes. A man's adaptability, his power of surviving on the physical plane, depends upon this. Those who suffer most at the front are those who compensate themselves least—who become least brutalised; they go mad, or get permanent shell-shock, or are shot for a self-inflicted wound. Those who are able to reduce themselves most nearly to the machine survive in comparative comfort.

"Something analogous to this occurs in the spiritual plane. The moral qualities evoked in men bound together against a common enemy are not denied, but they have something akin to the moral standard of mediæval Christendom confronting the Devil. They have nothing to do with Christ or with a sense of Divine Love. On the contrary, a man has by the nature of his work and life to lower his whole spiritual being and blunt and deaden his capacity to suffer with Christ, as he gradually accustoms himself to the life he has to lead. Alas! it was but too easy for most of us to do this. But I, for one, shall always protest against it as a final argument against warfare. The hardening process the soldier undergoes is not a strengthening but a

weakening, a cutting away, a stunting of the whole man. I seemed to perceive in it the wisdom of Christ's dislike of physical violence as a means to any spiritual end. But although we were exceedingly adaptable in this hardening process, it produced a curious feeling of irritation, of secret guilt. It also produces, worst of all, a fatigue of the soul. The act of fighting is, and continues to be, a shock (in the mediæval meaning of the term) to the spirit of each individual soldier, whether he is conscious of it at the time or not, and the result of shock is a decline in the vitality of the patient, a lowering of pulse, a lowering of temperature. . . .

"It cannot be too often emphasised that the fine qualities of humanity displayed by soldiers are revealed by war, but are *not* produced by it. Rather they are produced *in spite* of it. This fatigue of the soul as one of the results of the war I have dwelt upon because all other results will be affected by it, and (incidentally) owing to it there devolves a greater responsibility upon spiritually-minded Englishmen at home. Whether there are changes, actions or reactions in religion owing to the war, there will be a weariness of spirit, a tendency to failure of effort, which have to be reckoned with."

A number of other witnesses call attention to this hardening effect of the prolonged strain.

From a private in the R.A.M.C. : "The materialistic view of life and morality is, in my opinion, largely due to the effects of Army life and discipline. The constant presence of danger tends to make a man fatalistic and callous, while his whole life out here, full of petty grievances and at times brutal injustice,

combined with what is generally called 'being *fed up*,' makes a man despondent and careless in thought and action."

A great many of the papers in reply to the question, "What are the men thinking about Society and the War and Religion?" say that the men are not thinking at all, but are simply carrying on. A considerable number also speak of the peculiar benumbing and hardening effect upon the emotions and imagination which our correspondents describe so poignantly. The truth is, that human nature in this war is being subjected to a strain that civilised man was never intended to undergo; and in all our forecasts of the future we shall do well to remember the tremendously strong tendency to reaction which is bound to follow the war.

In this connection we may cite a memorandum prepared for this Committee by Baron von Hügel "The first two years of the war have been one thing—roughly, all to the good; the second part of the war has been—and that is another thing—upon the whole far more anxious-making, far more mixed, or even evil, than that first part. Yet we are examining and suggesting for the end of the war, that is for men who, upon the whole, will have been much more damaged by it, and considerably less helped by it, than would have been the men we would have had to consider had the war ended in August, 1916. So did the Napoleonic wars, because of their long duration, coarsen and lower European life for some thirty years. My father, who fought at Leipzig and invaded France with the Allies, looking back, in conversation with me in 1868, upon the

terrible frivolity and worldliness of, say, 1818-1848 warned me not to judge those his younger years and times too severely ; that Byron's ' Don Juan ' and the ' First Gentleman in Europe,' and their immense vogue, were men's reaction from those twenty odd years of excessive discipline and heroism—excessive for the majority and for so long."

In this connection it is very significant that after Waterloo it took seventeen years for England to attain her first Reform Bill, and France fifteen years before she attained her first victory over the Bourbon reaction, and that it was not till 1848 that Continental Europe as a whole threw off the incubus of moribund Feudalism by the great revolutionary movement of that year, which was effected by the children of the men who fought through the Napoleonic wars.

(b) *Materialistic Environment.*

Many correspondents refer to the generally materialising influence of the environment of warfare. The main trend of the evidence runs deeply and strongly in this direction. This has, however, of course, to be modified in connection with what is said elsewhere about the religious impact of the war, and also about the nobler qualities displayed by the men. But if we are to be just to the total phenomenon, we must allow the witnesses to speak for themselves.

Practically the whole of them bear witness that, in the bottom of their minds, the men have learned to hate war. They accept their share in it as inevitable, and have "stuck" it, but they certainly did not glory



in it, and they have bitterly resented the highly-coloured accounts of it sent home by some war correspondents.

No doubt sheer physical repulsion from the wearing and revolting aspects of war plays a large part in this, but there is more in it than that. To speak broadly, it seems evident that most of the conditions of warfare put a premium upon the material and animal side of man's nature, and tend to discourage that within him which he knows to be the higher and finer part.

From a minister, a hut worker, with the Salonica Forces : " An initial word seems worth saying here—the average soldier does no deliberate conscious thinking on such topics. He never did, and if by chance he ever did, the odds are that as a soldier he never will. Army life deadens feeling and kills thought. ' I have stopped thinking,' said a man I know, H.M. Inspector of Schools, ' I now do just what I am told and in between think about eating, drinking, and sleeping.' The Army life kills thought, concentrating attention on the body.

" On the other hand, crude discussions often take place that are in essence discussions of the above topics, and no doubt in the course of the experience of his days the material for opinion-making is being deposited in the mind of the average soldier.

" The material view of life taken by the soldier has an obvious excuse. From the time he strips before the medical officer at the recruiting station up to the moment when he is dosed with a tot of rum before going over the top, he is treated by the Army as an animal fit or unfit for certain uses. The main use



of a Y.M.C.A. to the average C.O. is that it runs a canteen. His question 'What can you do for my men?' means what food and drink have you got, and how cheaply can you sell them?

"Army conditions, activities, its life principle, are material. The reflex action in the men is clear.

"The soldier's life concentrates his thoughts on his body. His pay is scandalous; often rations are bad and will not go round; often he is robbed of sleep; usually his effort is to dodge work; often he is unfit without being able to convince the M.O. of that; the system peels off his sense of individuality; he is dealt with in the mass; he is treated as an animal fit or unfit for certain purposes. He sees that only the fittest survive, and he either sets all his thought on being physically fit or, in 'fed-upness,' casts about for some method of making himself unfit so as to get out of it.

From a private, R.A.M.C., New Zealand Force:  
"War confuses the average man's thoughts so hopelessly that he is not able to think deeply. Thought becomes shallow and is occupied with whatever amusements or excitement are at hand.

"The manner of life of a soldier in camp, surrounded by all the most subtle temptations, and hardly a voice raised against them, save from chaplains (who mix with officers when not on Church parade), and in the trenches where they are out to slaughter their enemy, by sniping, bombing, raiding, or advancing, creates an atmosphere of sordid existence that has not an atom of faith or belief in the ideal life preached by religion.

"On the battlefield material and physical force

are so conspicuously predominant in the form of high explosives and guns of all sizes and shapes, well-made trenches, dug-outs and funk-holes, fast aeroplanes and observation balloons (to say nothing of miles of transport and railways), that it is easy to suppose that the side with the best equipment will win. The men in the section where the best dug-outs are will fare best during a bombardment, and if our artillery is strong enough to smash Fritz's defensive works we will advance and take his position. Physical endurance and numbers count too. If we can endure more and outnumber the Germans we will likely win. Under such conditions the reality and the power of God are difficult to realise, and only the ear of a devout Christian can hear the still, small voice above the roar of cannon."

The worst effects of this materialising influence seem to be found at the camps and bases. This to some extent accounts for the conflict of evidence in this chapter. A report from one of the great French bases gives a glimpse into the mind of the men who have been exposed to this tremendous upheaval of the primitive and material conditions of warfare. "The indiscriminate commingling of men of all varieties of moral character has had a profoundly modifying effect. Large numbers, thrown without choice of theirs into intimate association with men of low moral tone, with no counteracting home or social influence, have unquestionably become coarsened and unspiritualised, insensitive to immoralities and impieties against which their nature in ordinary circumstances would have healthily reacted. It may be confidently anticipated that the return to whole-

some surroundings will result in very many cases in moral and spiritual restoration.

“The unaccustomed rigidity of discipline, often injudiciously administered, has bred in many a mental tone of unfairness and prejudice which renders judgment on all sorts of matters unreliable.

“The great majority are wearied and bored by the whole sorry, ghastly business, fretted to sour exasperation. Consequent upon this is a certain relaxation of the moral sense which makes men disposed to advocate any measure whatever which conceivably might shorten the war. There is a widespread indisposition to apply Christian standards to the determination of the legitimacy of such measures as ‘reprisals’ in their starkest and most ‘tit-for-tat’ form. This is an example of how the war conditions have produced states of mind the predominance of which is calculated to give false impressions as to the real mentality of the soldiers. Patient presentation of the Christian view in discussion commonly secures in the long run a large change in mind, freed from the vengeful obsession at least for the time being.

“There can be little doubt that, while the circumstances and conditions of warfare have rendered some religious as they were not before, others, and a far larger number, have largely lost what religion they had. The great majority have not done so through intellectual difficulties destructive to their faith, but through the contamination of immoral influences fatal to spirituality. It is melancholy to have to record that the decided weight of testimony supports the view that the general moral level of the men in the Army has sunk. One

witness speaks of 'the frightful amount of temptation put before the soldier, who has no means of avoiding it, no matter how honestly he tries; with no home or social life.' 'Can men living together under the conditions of beasts,' he asks, 'have a very lofty outlook morally?' Another, who speaks out of a sad personal experience, pathetically writes, 'Of course, every man has his own secret ideal, his own thought of what he might be, his own knowledge of what he really is, and, if he is indifferent (to religion), the ideal gradually fades, the thought of what he might have been becomes oblivion, and what he actually is he cares not.' So far has the moral deterioration gone in certain circles that some men can say, 'We are not ashamed to do wrong, we are not afraid of being heard to blaspheme, but we are (some of us) afraid to be seen doing right, afraid to say the word against wrong.' There is evidence that the rebellion against the condition of things and the experiences through which soldiers are compelled to pass have helped to fret out of many the sense of personal unworthiness and to blunt the sense of personal responsibility."

It will be seen that in warfare the whole system is directed towards the accumulation and utilising of the greatest possible amount of fighting force, both in materials and in men. But the human element itself is utilised so as to get the maximum of physical force out of it. The *morale* of the men is considered, but it is viewed as a means to this material end. Everything converges on the accumulation and distribution of physical energy. That is to say, men are treated as things. Treated as things, they tend to

sink to that level. Were it not that warfare were more than that, that it meant danger, endurance, sacrifice, fellowship, its effect would be purely degrading.

## II.

### THE BRIGHTER SIDE.

So much for the evil influence of war. Let us now consider the other side of the matter.

#### (a) *Humanity.*

From an officer in a Scottish regiment: "The war has created a new tenderness between man and man, a new sense of fellowship and social sympathy, *i.e.* within a circle embracing the nation and friendly aliens. It has probably, owing to the barbarous conduct of the Germans, sharpened international antagonisms, and weakened the sense of Humanity as such. The British soldier of to-day is unable in many ways to recognise Humanity in the person and under the uniform of a German soldier."

#### (b) *Broadening and Deepening Effect.*

Over against much of what has been said above as to the tendency of Army life to depress thought we must set the other side, if we are to get the whole complex truth before us.

It is clear, as we have seen in Chapter II, that the presence of danger and death awaken in some the sense of a spiritual world, and set many thinking more deeply on religion.

A private in the R.A.M.C. writes: "'Has the war



made them think more deeply ? ' I have already said that we do not like to think too much, but yet we do think *more* than we used to. But a chap is frightened to think, for it makes him wretched—the thought of what he might have been doing at home *now*—out with the girl, at the pictures or theatre, etc. The job one dreads is to be on guard at night, to stand alone for hours in a shelled village behind the line with the atmosphere of death and destruction around him,—ruined houses ; a shattered church tower standing ghastly in the dull moonlight ; the grey darkness softened by the star shells over the line a short distance away ; the rattle of musketry, an occasional boom of a gun several miles behind, the spitting of a machine gun,—contrasted with the awful silence of the deserted village itself, broken by the fall of a slate, as a stray bullet ' pings ' on the roof of a ruin,—the scuttling of hundreds of rats, the hum of mosquitoes, and the slow silent tread of the men going to and from the line with rations, ammunition, relief parties ; and the tread of the stretcher-bearers, with their burden shrouded in a blanket, on their way to the ambulance aid-post in a cellar of the old village—the groan of the wounded man as he passes ; and then occasionally a burying party—the spade work in the little meadow, the smothered voices, the little crosses in the darkness, the muffled tread of the grave diggers on their way to their cellar-billet where they will drown the remembrance of their night's work in a good rum ration, and tumble into ' bed '—a blanket on the cellar floor—and sleep till the following mid-day. And, again, nothing but the silence of the village—silence pungent with

the scent of roses and flowers growing uncared for in the little gardens which three years ago were the pride of happy, simple country people, and the play-grounds of little children ; a broken crucifix at the cross-roads, a shrine with remnants of the little ' gifts ' placed there by children's hands ;—dawn—' stand to ' in the line,—machine guns more active—more big guns begin to speak—Fritz ' strafes ' the old village again with half a dozen shells just to remind the ruins that he is still near. An aeroplane hums somewhere overhead,—and to the unspeakable joy of the man on guard ' kindly light ' supersedes the darkness. Soon he is relieved by his pal who ' comes on next,' and, after a swig of rum, goes to sleep in his clothes. He may remark in the course of the day, ' It was a hell of a night last night ; there ought to be two for company.' He has been forced to think."

From a chaplain with a London Division : " I am writing broadly of the mass of men, hitherto out of touch with the Churches. I am convinced that of the hundreds of men who go into action the majority by far come out affected towards good rather than coarsened. They come out realising that there are times when they cannot get on without God ; they are not afraid of Him, they flee to Him with their simple cries for strength because their surroundings are so exacting. Conscience, instinct, tells them that these surroundings are not of God's making or liking. Their conceptions of God, merely relics perhaps of childhood, yet precious, revolt against attributing war to God, and so they run to Him, not away from Him. They cast all their care upon Him, for they know that He careth

for them. They look to Him as their Protector; in other words, He is a Father to them. So I know that they have Religion because I honestly believe that they believe in the First Person of the Blessed Trinity.

“ If the war shall have laid this foundation stone in the heart of our nation’s manhood, a stone upon which in the days to come to build the full Truth as it is in Jesus, the war will not have been fought in vain.

“ What a challenge to the Churches to unite in prayer for worthiness of this opportunity! . . . Hundreds and thousands of men, hitherto careless and without experience of the need of God, returning home having learnt the lesson that they cannot get on without God—more than that, that the God they have found is not, after all, against them, but on their side.”

Both sides, the good and the evil, are brought out in the following passage. A chaplain with a West of Scotland regiment (city), whose experience has been mainly in the Line, writes: “ Of course, it is also true that a good many men have been simply spoiled by the Army. Some have given way to drink and sexual folly who had a clean record before, and a good many have been coarsened and hardened. Some are simply made blasphemous by danger. Some give in to their fears and are disintegrated by the strain of the front. There will be hang-dog men among us who will hate to remember the front because they discovered there that they are blue funks.

“ But my impression is that on the whole and in regard to the men who were out during the first two years of the war, the more general effect of their

experience was to make them more thoughtful and bigger men.

“As to their characters, there can be no doubt that it has put stiffening into them. Most show signs of nervous strain, and they may carry the signs for years. And most have been hardened—though not necessarily in a bad sense. You cannot remain the same when you have GOT TO become accustomed to having your pals knocked out, and men who become familiar with death in that way inevitably become hard. War is a vile business at the best, and a degrading and disgusting thing often. Much fine sensitiveness will have gone. Many will be cynical and bitter. Many more will be just rough. But at the same time some sterling virtues may have been ingrained into them. Boys who were ‘nice’ and polite and delicate in feeling, and reverent in bearing, may come home swearing like troopers, and with all the bloom brushed off their manners, but at the same time they may have more real backbone than in the days when they were so nice.

“But this is a huge subject. Men react in so many various ways to the same stimulus that it is just here I find generalisations most difficult. I do, however, think quite dogmatically that the demand for reality in the Churches will be immensely stronger after the war—and so will the impatience with trifles.”

### *Conclusion.*

The thought with which one turns from this somewhat conflicting part of the evidence is how poorly equipped the men were spiritually and intellectually for so sudden and terrible a crisis. Church and nation ought to have



done better by them. The war has come crashing into the confused world of thinking of the multitude, into the formal and conventional religion of others, into the shallow philosophies and cults of others still; and they have no adequate categories with which to explain it. They are confused and bewildered, and the more earnest minds among them are seeking after a deeper faith. Many there are, no doubt, whose religion and whose thought had gone deeper, and they have nobly stood the strain of the great hurricane. They will come out of it with a faith deepened and broadened, and a nature made more instead of less humane by the miseries through which they have come. It is among such men that the Churches of the future will find their leadership. To such men we must make our appeal. It is too soon yet to speak of the spiritual battle as being either lost or won, too soon yet to say that, as a whole, the war has either debased or elevated men. The real spiritual conflict which will determine the issue is not yet over; it is at hand. Its wavering fortunes can be wholly retrieved: its immature victories can be brought to a splendid consummation.

The time has come to throw the reserves into the spiritual battle, in order that the freedom won in the earthly war by so vast a sacrifice of human life and happiness may be used for the building up of a nobler social order and the laying of the foundations of an associated instead of a warring world society.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V, Part II.



# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FAILURE OF EDUCATION

There is unanimous criticism of both our religious and secular education in the evidence.

*General Education.*

*Evidence :* Men have not been taught to think : relation of this to immorality : no mental resources or ideas : sluggish intellect : superficiality : materialism of education : public schools also criticised.

*Religious Education.* Two complaints recur in the evidence : (1) the absence of serious thought about religion ; (2) the ignorance of the facts and truths of Christianity. This evidence is from all schools of thought.

*Evidence :* Failure of religious education to give foundation of Christian belief : ministers take too much for granted in teaching Christianity : ignorance equally true of illiterate and well-educated : the average young officer : instruction on the Bible urgently needed : Scottish evidence much the same.

Adolescence is the critical time. "Lost to the Church at the age of adolescence."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FAILURE OF EDUCATION

IN the fierce trial of the war, among the things which have been tried and found wanting is our educational system. This applies to our secular and our religious education alike. On this point there is a copious and an unbroken agreement of opinion among all our witnesses. It is possible that they fail to make adequate allowance for the conditions of warfare, which as we have been seen tend to discourage all independent thinking, and depress the level of intelligence among the great masses of the men, and further that they ignore too much the share of our educational system in producing the great qualities which our men have shown in action. But our business here is not to discount the evidence but to report it, and this we shall endeavour to do as faithfully as we can.

#### *General Education.*

Practically all the relevant evidence dwells on the inability of the great mass of men to think for themselves. A chaplain of distinguished ability (since fallen) writes : “ ‘ What are the men thinking ? ’ Generally speaking, and here I find everyone agrees with me, they are not thinking at all. They are just carrying on. Much

material for thought is, no doubt, being subconsciously hoarded up. I should like to make a few observations, at the risk of appearing exaggerated and dogmatic, because, I believe, they lie at the root of the whole inquiry. Englishmen, as contrasted with Frenchmen, Russians, possibly even Germans, do not think and never have thought. They have not either been helped to, or expected to. (1) Education has been merely imposition—the learning of lessons, not the stimulus to thinking. Education stops at the age of fourteen for the vast bulk, at the age when a boy has not, as a rule, the capacity for independent thought. Public School and University education has too often sacrificed thought to good form. (2) Industrial conditions, Trade Unionism, etc., seem to have entirely militated against independent thought. A man must industrially do what he is told, and politically and socially follow leaders, who do the thinking for him. The only men out here with the capacity for independent thought are the Colonials. Their continual observation of Englishmen is that they have no *initiative*, which, of course, can only spring from independent thought. (3) Religion has been practically in all denominations simply dogmatic, whether negatively or positively. What denomination has, for instance, adopted as its first tenet ‘Seek, and ye shall find,’ or ‘When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth?’ The Churches, once the pioneers and champions of independent thought, have sacrificed it to orthodoxy, dogmatising formality, emotionalism, etc. All this has been said a thousand times, so that it is perhaps hardly worth repeating. But it is almost

useless asking what men are *thinking* about things when they are not thinking at all. I have proved and tested this in many ways. Most things really fall under this—*morale*, for instance. Men are usually immoral from ignorance or thoughtlessness, or want of understanding what morality means. They drink because they are ignorant of intellectual stimulus. They swear—and this is the perpetual excuse—without meaning it. They cannot use language that has any meaning. Their letters fail in originality or interest. They spend hours in playing a game like ‘house’ because it requires no thought. A great deal of this thoughtlessness is due to war conditions. Men may have had independent interests before the war, and other opportunities for thought which are impossible now. Hence both officers and men take the line of least resistance and follow the crowd.” He goes on to speak of the sexual evil among officers, and says: “I consider that the root of the whole matter lies in the mind, and that certain chapters (vii, viii, and ix) of that neglected Book of Proverbs throw more light on the subject than anything else. If wisdom is neglected, the inevitable result is what we find to-day. . . . To sum up, the war reveals the Englishman as the best-hearted, the most enduring and most ignorant and least original man in the world. The work of the Church is to help him to build up what he has not got on the basis of what he has. An understanding Church is our great need.”

Another chaplain, describing a battalion of North of England men, mainly from a mining population, says: “There was a very general and noticeable ignorance. This was shown in their letter-writing,

their conversation, and in their general behaviour. Their world of ideas was singularly contracted. They were non-initiative to a degree. When left to themselves they appeared to have no mental resources to fall back upon. They read little save illustrated papers. They had no interest to speak of in other classes or nations. Scarcely one of them tried to acquire French. They simply regarded the 'foreigners' with good-natured tolerance. They were 'John Bullish' to a degree. The Bible was to them practically a closed book—doctrine to all intents and purposes non-existent."

A major of artillery writes : "How shocked I have been at the revelation of what British education has done for the Tommy, and for the officer. . . . It has made excellent clerks, engineers, and doctors—all of them skilled mechanics, the more skilled, the more materialist often. Geography has been efficiently taught, but none of those wonderful things called Ideas have been implanted. The 'Word' has never been made flesh for them ; and so their view of the world in which they live is very crude and materialistic."

A chaplain of wide experience writes : "The majority have had no real education. A certain amount of superficial knowledge has been imposed upon them, but they have not been helped to express themselves, nor to discriminate between good and bad reasonings. Their conclusions are largely intuitive, and are reached by subconscious or nearly subconscious processes, and when they try to state them, the few symbols in the way of expression which come readily to them are strained to convey a very wide diversity of meaning. While this seems to me true of the majority, there



are, of course, a great many articulate individuals. I have known men who carried about with them a Virgil, a Greek grammar, Browning, Tennyson, etc. They crowd a hut for a lecture on history, music, literature, travel, etc. A certain number are keen to get stiff stuff."

A very remarkable instance is the case of a Scottish student of Theology, who carried about with him a copy of "Sartor Resartus" and the Hebrew text of the Book of Job. He sent home to one of his teachers the MS. draft of a commentary on this latter volume. This man who was killed at Loos, acquired a great reputation in his regiment for his adventurous daring in No Man's Land.

A sergeant in the R.A.M.C., of very wide experience in camp, in the Line, and in hospital, writes: "It is difficult to get at the real mind of the men, because of a sluggish and unathletic intellect, an inertia of the spirit, a tendency to do and to submit to things because others do so. The Scotsmen I met were as a rule better educated than the English, and, more than that, they were three parts self-educated. Yet they had just as much or more the tendency to hypocrisy as the English. There is not very much serious thought on social or religious questions. We were never interested in problems, but sometimes in our own opinions on them. We were interested in our grievances, but not as part of the grievances or disabilities of the others."

A joint report of six chaplains<sup>1</sup>—general hospital experience—has the following passage: "The prevailing weakness is superficiality. Men are unwilling to think things out. Partly this is due to laziness, partly to the

<sup>1</sup> "Student and Sniper Sergeant," Hodder & Stoughton.

pressure of life in and out of the trenches, and partly to indulgence in sin. With the possible exception of the older universities all education is threatened with material objects. We believe much ill can be laid to the account of the competitive system, in prizes and class position, in emphasis upon results rather than methods, and in the absence of co-operative methods of work. They stimulate individuals, but leave the bulk untouched and unhelped."

An officer with a South of England rural regiment, after writing of the unwillingness of the men to think, continues: "I am sure our education is at fault, both public school and otherwise; it leaves men with few general interests. I owe any interests I have to home rather than school, and I am not surprised at less fortunate people being bored by everything. Nineteenth century education has aimed too much at imparting facts and left the training of the eye of the soul to chance."

It will be seen from the above that the general criticism of our education ranges over the whole country, and over elementary and public schools alike.

There is evidence that Scottish education is still in advance of the rest, but here also the levelling effect of modern industrialism is clearly evident.

In reply to the question whether the limitations and weaknesses of the men are due to education and social surroundings a chaplain with a West of Scotland (city) regiment writes: "In a very real sense, of course, they all are. That is to say, the material is all right, and the fault lies with the use of that material by our institutions; and by the influences of our social life.

Indeed the prevailing impression left on our mind is that our men are capable of far greater things than they have ever achieved, and that they might be worthy citizens of a far greater State than ours. Knowing as I do in detail the circumstances in which the mass of our men are brought up and the influences which play upon them from their earliest childhood, I feel that the amazing thing is that they are as good as they are. But I know of no education anywhere which really educes all the best from the young manhood of the nation. Some of the weaknesses and limitations I have referred to are fully shared by those who are called well educated. They also indulge in filth of speech. And they have not, on the whole, learned to think. Therefore, if it be true that education could do anything, it must be a better and a truer education than is now common anywhere. I am not forgetting that a human being is a robust force capable of resisting almost any influences. He has a will, and he insists on using that will in most wayward ways. When we blame their education for their faults, we have to remember that our young men at times refuse to respond to the very influences which might help them most. In fact, they can be utterly 'cussed.' But having said that, I may say again that my impression is that, on the whole, they are capable of far greater things than they achieve. The best possible has *not* been made of them. As to serious thought on social and religious questions, of course a minority are very thoughtful, and both read and discuss with acute intelligence. But is the ordinary man anywhere a thoughtful creature? I think not. He seems to me

to be swayed by his feelings to a most extraordinary extent. The way to move him is not to argue with him, but to appeal to his instincts."

Another Scottish chaplain writes, and it may be taken as summing up what is a practically universal verdict on the defects of our present system of education: "Education (the present and past style of it) is largely to blame, on the whole, for the unsatisfactory state of morals. The conception of education as a preparation for material success, and the consequent endeavour to pack the mind with morally colourless facts, have done untold damage. No worse age could be chosen for the taking away a boy or girl from school than the age of fourteen. At that age they are changing, becoming adolescent. Then, if ever, they need to be kept in the schools to receive moral and religious education, and not thrust out into the world. Mentality without morality is fatal. But, most of all, education needs to be on a Christian (both ethical and doctrinal) basis. 'Knowledge is virtue' is not wholly false."

We have been considering mainly the general failure of our educational system to teach men to think about the deeper and broader affairs of life, and in so doing have trespassed to some extent in advance upon what is glaringly evident, the comparative failure of our systems of religious education. And let it be noted that on this, throughout our evidence, there is no difference of opinion among the witnesses.

### *Religious Education.*

What has been already said in this volume regarding the thoughts of men on particular religious



doctrines will have prepared the reader for the general statements which follow. Throughout our evidence two complaints recur (1) that there is an absence of serious thought about religion, and (2) that there is ignorance of the facts and truths of Christianity. With regard to the former of these points it is to be noticed that it pertains to a prevailing temper of mind. There is the same absence of serious thought on most subjects which require it. The deeper levels of the intelligence have not been reached; its latent powers have never been called into play. The shock of the war has, indeed, done for some what their previous education had failed to do. The world, which lay utterly beyond their ken, has opened upon their sight, and they want to know more about it. Further, social questions have awakened a new interest in many, though even here there seems to be a great lack of thinking and the power to take a broad and deep view. Hence, it is hardly surprising that there should be little real thought on the great truths of religion. But what at first does come home to the reader with a shock is the persistent evidence as to the ignorance of Christian truth. When one thinks of the amount of time and labour which has been spent in the last half-century on religious education in day schools and Sunday-schools, the result seems strangely small and must inevitably lead to the question whether our methods are sound. Let us, however, hear what the witnesses have to say on the matter. It is important to note that the complaint as to the ignorance of the men on religious matters is not made only by those who lay special emphasis on the dogmatic side



of Christianity, but is general. It will be noted that the evidence comes from witnesses of all schools of religious thought. It is not as if Catholic or Evangelical complained that his particular view of truth was unknown.

A well-known Nonconformist minister, a Y.M.C.A. hut worker, writes: "There is a widespread misunderstanding of what Christianity stands for. Either religious education has been hopelessly defective, or very large numbers of men have not had the advantage of Christian training at all."

From a Wesleyan chaplain: "Men do not seem to have a very clear idea of what the Christian religion is, or rather did not before the war. It was a novelty to many to attend a religious service."

From a chaplain (C. of E., hospital experience): "The soldier is quite amazingly *ignorant* of the Christian religion. I have had confirmation candidates who did not know the names of the four Gospels."

From a lady hut worker of three years' experience: "One of the great difficulties in the way of belief, it seems to me, is the lack of education in general, and in scores of men the failure of their Sunday-school teaching to have given them any real foundation of Christian belief. I do not think the majority of men have any clear idea of what the Christian religion is, for we find that the simplest plain facts from the New Testament given them in an uneclesiastical and informal way appeal to them enormously, and they are genuinely interested, and come Sunday after Sunday to lantern services with just a few pictures, and a plain simple talk on morals and Christian living. They respond

well to all attempts at a real spirit of fellowship."

From a private in the R.A.M.C. : "Men will not think. I have spoken with several who make no profession of religion at all, and have talked with them of different matters relating to spiritual things, and I have heard such remarks as these : ' Well, I've never thought much about it. But I suppose there must be a God or something to keep in order the universe. Anyway it does not seem to matter so very much.' It is the spirit of happy-go-lucky listlessness which has so great a hold on the young life of our age when matters of serious concern are brought up."

From a worker with the Soldiers' Christian Association : "Comparatively few have any idea of what real Christian religion is."

From a corporal in the R.F.A. : "Ignorance on all matters is very great and few men are vitally connected with any religious body. The religious apathy is great, and seems to be the result of ignorance. . . . This ignorance seems to be the result of the early ending of Sunday-school instruction, which is seldom kept on after the age of fourteen."

This correspondent advocates a kind of secondary religious school and also more *teaching* from the pulpit.

From a sergeant in the R.A.M.C. : "The chief difficulty the Church has to contend with is *ignorance* of Christ and the claims of Christianity. This is due to incomplete education, limited environment, and friendships with but one type of man. The men need to be instructed in a simple creed."

From an officer (South of England battalion) : "The

mind of to-day has lost all interest in the Bible, as the Church has neglected it as a means of personal study. Hence there is a gross ignorance of the spiritual applications of the truth by the average men. I think a lot of it is caused by the indifferent teaching they receive in their education. The average boy gets to detest the Bible at school or college, as its historical side only is thrust upon him. It is the young mind that has to be reached chiefly, and some masters are quite indifferent to a lad's eager questioning as to the spiritual application. All this wants to be altered."

From a lance-corporal, A.S.C. : " One of the chief limitations of the men is the lack of education, and lack of a knowledge of orthodoxy. One hears so often from the ordinary man, ' I believe in a Divine Being,' but if you ask for the tenets of his creed, let alone the meaning of those tenets, he is lost. The great mass of our population has not been instructed in or touched by religion for years, except for the percentage of our children in the Sunday-schools. In our present method of presenting Christianity, ministers, I feel sure, take far too much for granted. . . . Examples : One man did not know what Ascension Day meant, another the meaning of the State Church, and a third the meaning of Good Friday. That ignorance and misconception do exist, many seem to know, but do not realise nearly enough. They go deeper than the masses outside the Church ; a very great many who have some practical religion cannot give nearly sufficient reason for their faith. This, doubtless, in part points to *inefficient* or *inadequate* Sunday or day school teaching, also sending children to various denominations ;

especially is this so among the working classes. Because of the prevalent 'taking for granted' idea, there seems to be practically no definite adult instruction in our Churches. I think, perhaps, one of our greatest needs now is a definite statement of orthodoxy by those in authority in each denomination, just to clear the controversial air a bit for instruction and guidance. About Sunday-schools—after all, they are the foundation; if that is unsound all else will go wrong, and there is something radically wrong with religion in England."

From an officer in the R.G.A. : " A very few seem to have any deep Christian convictions. . . . Many of the difficulties of belief are due to lack of instruction, to the difficulty of understanding a quarter of what they are taught to say and believe, and of what they have read from the Bible. Can the fault lie in bad education in the past, in trying to teach dogmas perfunctorily, without any attempt at a reasonable explanation to which everyone is entitled, instead of encouraging questions, and trying to get over that shyness and tremendous reserve which is the characteristic of English boys on all questions which have to do with religion, a reserve which is excellent to a certain degree, but keeps so many from asking questions at the age when they are most in the position to get help and guidance ? "

From an officer in a Hussar regiment : " When I first joined the unit over two years ago, the thing that struck me was the ignorance of the men both on the dogmatic and practical side, particularly the former. Now, after becoming more familiar with the men, the point that



strikes me is the materialism and complete absence of any recognition of the spiritual. . . . I suppose they have all had as much religious experience as all of us in adolescence and early manhood, but there being no dogmatic knowledge to explain this experience, or knowledge of the practice of religion to develop it, the faculty of religion has withered away. I place the 'failure' in our educational system. We (the various denominations and Churches) have shirked our task and given ease to our consciences by letting the State take on the burden of religious education. The State is not qualified to do so. . . . Simple Bible teaching is a dogmatic failure. And religious education is most important when it touches the practice of religion, *i.e.* private prayer, public worship, Christian habits, and Christian morality (*i.e.*, the Beatitudes). State religion fails in this."

From a chaplain (S.C.F. non-C. of E., two-and-a-half years with Regulars and Kitchener's Armies from northern industrial centres): "To speak generally, the men do not think much about religion. The greatest difficulties one has to contend with are the very vague ideas that men have generally about religion. This limitation appears to be the result of the lack of definiteness in the teaching of the Churches. This ignorance is not merely true of the illiterate, but also of the otherwise well-educated soldier. The crude religious ideas expressed in officers' messes are generally lamentable."

From a chaplain (C. of E. men, Scottish Brigade, chiefly from North of England) (after speaking of the religious impressions made by the war on those in the



line): "It will be exceedingly difficult to bring these men whose hearts God has touched into line with the ordinary routine of the Catholic Church, and it can only be a gradual process. Their ignorance is so colossal."

From a gunner, H.A.C.: "Intellectual hindrances do not count for much. The indifference frequently shown is often caused by insufficient education on religious matters. Men have learned enough about their religion to see difficulties and obstacles, but their knowledge is in many cases not sufficient to enable them to overcome these difficulties."

An officer in a Guards regiment finds "an absolute lack of the knowledge of the fundamental truths of Christianity, and of the Bible and the power of prayer. This is greatly due to lack of spiritual education. The war has made men think. But, unless they find Christ now, the reaction will be all the worse later on."

From a senior chaplain (C. of E.), whose experience has been entirely in hospitals, with both officers and men, and who has met almost every possible type and branch of the Service: "I do not find much serious thought about the bigger problems. A few men are thinking hard and far. Men who think start afresh. The Church must help men to think and be a stimulus to thinking. . . . The Church needs exceedingly to preach the possibilities, positive, not negative, of the individual soul in Christ. Men sit listening to that. I have seen them sit listening as if it were a new Gospel. Their knowledge of Christianity is very vague indeed. It is mostly memories of Sunday- and day-school remembered very verbally and very partially. Many stop thinking at fourteen. Education has been rotten

with materialism. It wants ideals, *i.e.*, religion, *i.e.*, religious men and women as teachers ; details of the time allotted to religious instruction are a minor point. Men have forgotten an astonishing amount of what they learned about the Bible, etc., in their day school. Only ideals stick tight."

From an Assistant Chaplain-General of large experience at a base in France : " ' Lost to Christ's Church at the age of adolescence ' accounts for much that we see in the religious condition of the men."

From a Y.M.C.A. canteen worker, who has come into contact with thousands of soldiers, mostly privates : " Vast numbers of men know very little about religious *ideas*. They often amaze me by their ignorance of *beliefs*. I think there has been in my conversations extraordinarily little evidence of real religious training. But generations of attendance at Sunday-schools has left its mark in knowledge of hymns, which most of the men sing with delight. Most men have had links with the Church in their boyhood. If clergy or ministers have specialised in helping young men they are *never forgotten*. Bible Class leaders have influenced many profoundly."

From an officer in a London regiment : " The message of Christianity has clearly never reached the great majority of the men at all."

From an officer of the R.F.C. : " The average young officer has no philosophy of life at all. He thinks the Christian revelation ' damned nonsense,' though he has not the courage to say so. During six months, at morning masses held three times a week, the highest attendance was three officers. Most are entirely

ignorant of the elementary facts of Christianity. Their attitude is not contempt, but towards a brother officer who accepts the Christian faith it is one of surprise and incredulity ; if they like him, of enormous astonishment. Their public opinion proclaims that above all things religion does not matter, and, further, any way, it is quite unintelligible. . . . The boy who leaves school, as he usually does, with no real religious training at all has no chances whatever of withstanding it. This state of things is what one might expect to find, because the average young officer is never taught. The cause of the whole thing is *ignorance*. The average man has never been taught to think, and still less has the Christian faith ever been suggested to him as a working explanation of his existence. He is completely ignorant of what the Christian revelation consists. He knows nothing of the history of religion in general or of the Catholic Church in particular. He knows nothing whatever of Christian evidences, or of the fundamental doctrines of the Faith. Such doctrines as those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Divinity and Humanity of Christ, are to him mere gibberish, because he has never been taught. Such things as the habit of prayer, the meaning and use of the Sacraments and Catholic worship in general, are things outside his comprehension. Why ? Because again he has never been taught. The religion of his home and school is a vague, indefinite belief in a vague, indefinite God Who must never be mentioned. The remedy is obvious—the real teaching of the Catholic Faith in its entirety—definite detailed teaching—both in the parish and in the school.”

From a hut worker with Salonika Army : " Immediate steps should be taken to reorganise and revitalise work among the young. Our Sunday-schools are woeful—to anyone who knows anything of the difficulty of teaching, utterly woeful. And because our work among the young is so feeble, the adult finds the Church dull to tears."

From a joint report from a base in France, based on a wide comparison of local evidence : " For the most part they do not seem to think of religion at all. In cases where they do think, their ideas are apt to be vague, negative, and distorted, with the emphasis laid on non-central issues."

From a joint report from another base in France, also resting on a wide induction : " It may safely be said that while, in general, the conception of God is taken from Christ, there is very widespread failure to understand or appreciate essential Christian doctrines. One is met everywhere with the question (put in such a way as to imply an assertion) whether a decent, respectable life is not enough to recommend one to God and to ensure that it will be all right with one in the Hereafter. . . . An indication in another line of the misunderstanding of Christianity is the frequent quotation of 'an eye for an eye,' etc., as furnishing sufficient justification for the extremest measures of reprisal. It is enough for many that that maxim is in the Bible to justify its literal application. In this connection it may be said that there is urgent need for wise instruction on modern lines regarding the Bible. Old views of it are responsible for a large amount of scepticism with regard to its spiritual



authority as a whole. Men have listened with profound interest to a single talk on its origin and history, and have gratefully acknowledged that it constituted a revelation upon revelation to them, clearing up many perplexities, enabling them to deal satisfactorily with many difficulties, giving them a new understanding and appreciation of its true intention and value. It is of first importance that the Bible, the text-book of faith, should be so expounded as to reinstate it in real interest and authority. Christianity has been reduced in the minds of many to a system of ethics, a system which, in the light of current events, is widely regarded as impracticable."

From a chaplain: "The 'religion' of the men is due (1) to their antipathy to the Church, and (2) to their lamentable misconception of what men are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of men. More than half the men out here came out with the most meagre spiritual experience or religious training, so that in danger they are 'like infants crying in the night,' and out of danger they are pretty much what they used to be."

We may sum up this formidable current of witnesses by a senior chaplain's impression after nineteen months' general service, mainly with A.S.C. London and Midland troops: "In the sphere of religion one's first main impression is that of almost incredible ignorance on the part of officers and men alike. It is an indication of their ignorance that men do not know where to find St. Mark's Gospel, to say nothing of an Old Testament book, and have no conception of what Whit-Sunday stands for. . . . There are, of course,



many individuals with intellectual difficulties, but the great majority had never found themselves compelled to reckon with religion at all. Most men are not opposed or alienated. They had not been near enough for that" (he thinks that this is due in part to the entirely secular and unreligious spirit of "many council schools and some denominational schools"), "a state of things even more marked in secondary and grammar schools, while boys from public schools are almost in worse case, for while many of them have known little home influence toward real religion, they have generally escaped the parochial net of Sunday-school and Catechism, and much of the Scripture teaching given by their form and house masters has been of 'the Muppim and Huppim' type. In saying this one does not forget the magnificent devotion, spiritual earnestness, and real pastoral enthusiasm of many teachers and school-masters, but unhappily these remain exceptional instead of normal. Sunday-schools of all denominations are still grievously ineffective."

The evidence on religious education presented above is, it will be noted, taken almost entirely from men and women whose experience has been with troops from England. We have relatively received less evidence on this particular subject from workers and chaplains with the Scottish forces, but what we have received indicates that here, also, there is grave cause for disquietude.

A chaplain with a West of Scotland (city) battalion writes: "Yet most men do think—whiles.<sup>1</sup> They think about religious matters and show such extra-

<sup>1</sup> Scotice, "sometimes."

ordinary *ignorance* of simple fundamentals as might well make us ministers ashamed. Scotsmen, in particular, are really interested in religious questions, and I *think* their interest centres often round the future—Salvation in terms of the next life. They have no clear idea of what the Christian religion is. They do not know much about the Churches, and do them much injustice in their thoughts.”

From an officer in a Highland battalion: “Men are either complacent through a spoon-fed religion, or are in a state of ignorance.”

From an officer of a Scottish battalion, with workers and rural labourers: “Men are ignorant of the fundamentals of the Christian faith.”

From a chaplain (Lowland Territorial battalion): “The majority were without a definite faith and clear standard, belief was shadowy, and the standard accepted was the ordinary conventional Christian. . . . Their limitations and weaknesses were those of men, well disposed to all that was good, who had no clear standard of duty, and no definite faith to guide them. In consequence it seems that the work of the Church will be to put Christian faith before them in a simple, clear way for their faith and their following. These limitations, etc., are in part due to superficial education and social surroundings, and not by any means entirely to the Church’s failure. There has not been awakened in them the consciousness of a need for a definite faith and a clear standard. There was really a lack of understanding of what the Christian religion really is. . . . Nearly all the men with whom I was dealing had Church connection. Many were members, some

workers. . . . They had been brought up in the Church, they found help for themselves in its worship, but beyond that I do not think they had gone far."

From the Report of the Church of Scotland Sub-Committee on the Services :<sup>1</sup> "One says, 'Men who have been years in Sabbath schools have no real grasp of religion.' The returns make many appeals to the Church to become alive to this problem. One says that 'The percentage of men in the Army who are hostile to religion is small, but among them there is the most amazing ignorance of the fundamental ideas of our religion.' 'Most men,' says one, 'have a vague belief in God and would wish to be buried with religious rites—though there is much superstition in this respect.' One makes the sweeping statement that 'the ignorance of the Army in religious matters is colossal.'"

On reviewing the evidence which has now been set before the reader, we cannot evade the conclusion that there is something gravely unsatisfactory in all the systems of religious education now in vogue among us. There is nothing in our evidence to indicate that any one of these should be exempted from this criticism. All the men of the nation have been through the primary or secondary or public schools. Mr. Carey Bonner, the Secretary of the Sunday School Union, estimates that "four out of five of the available young people and children of England and Wales are connected with the Sunday-schools." "For the purpose of my investigation," he writes, "I took the

<sup>1</sup> Based on 200 papers sent in answer to the Enquiry.

census returns of young people of Sunday-school age. From the total I deducted Roman Catholics, Jews, those in workhouses and asylums, a percentage of the wealthy class who never attend the Sunday-school, making also an allowance for young people living in boarding schools. After such deductions, there remained available for the Sunday-school 6,408,911. Now the total return from all Sunday-schools was 6,574,267. From the total I deducted (on careful calculation) 20 per cent. senior scholars over fifteen years of age ; this leaving a net result of junior scholars, fifteen and under, 5,257,814. Turning now to the leakage in the Sunday-schools, I find that as far as it is possible to get figures, and that as far as the unvarying testimony of superintendents enables one to form judgment, there is little doubt that about 80 per cent. of the scholars are lost to the direct influence and service of the Church and Sunday-school from fourteen years of age and upwards.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bonner’s conclusion is identical with that of an Assistant Chaplain-General, quoted above, “Lost to the Church at the age of adolescence.” It is upon this point that the best intelligence and heart of the Christian Church should now be concentrated. As yet there is no sufficient means of holding the adolescents as they emerge from the weekday and Sunday-schools into the great world. That four out of every five should be lost to the Church

<sup>1</sup> To make Sunday-school returns bear quite closely on the actual situation, they should of course be taken ten or even more years back, when the average man in the Army was at Sunday-school. The same principle, of course, would apply to Church and Board Schools.

is a startling fact. It will be seen how closely this wholly independent estimate tallies with that of our evidence as a whole. It seems that we have reached the very heart of our problem. If we solve it here we solve it everywhere.

But it is not so simple as it seems. We have to amend the education so that its influence shall hold the adolescent and not simply fall away from him, as it too often does at present, leaving only an atrophied remainder in his mind. We have to follow him with the personal influence of his teachers into weekday life; we have to give him something to do, which will enlist his awakening energies and sympathies; and, finally, we have to permeate the home and the social and economic environment with Christian ideals and influences far more potent than they are at present. So the problem of the education of the adolescent widens out as we consider it deeply. None the less, it is of primary importance that we should realise that here is our peril and failure, and here, above all, our opportunity.



# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

I. The wealth of unselfishness and heroism in the men is in sharp contrast with the poverty of their religious ideas.

*General Virtues.*

*Evidence :* Cheerfulness and devotion.

*Particular Virtues.*

The intensity of group-feeling has a far-reaching influence for good and evil.

*Evidence :* *Comradeship.* To many a great discovery : connection between it and Christianity not seen. *Unselfishness, Cheerfulness, Sense of Duty, Courage, Sincerity and Humility.*

What is the real source of these virtues ?

II. The above represents the essential man, but there is a darker side.

*Evidence :* *Petty dishonesty, Profanity and unclean speech, Gambling, Drunkenness, Immorality*—the gravest evil.

We must distinguish here between base and line, and also remember the pathological aspect.

The above evidence describes, not two classes of men, but two aspects of the same humanity.

Evidence as to the general character of "the 80 per cent."

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

WE have now got before our minds a picture of the inner mind of the soldier regarding religious and moral truth, and have also considered the influence upon him of the environment of society, of the war, and of the education which he has received. What is the resultant in conduct ?

#### I

It is impossible not to feel the sharpness of the contrast when we turn from the comparative poverty of the religious thoughts and ideals of the men to the wealth of noble virtues which they reveal in their relationship to one another and to the splendour of heroism which in great multitudes they have shown in loyalty to duty and to Fatherland. This contrast is indeed one of the most outstanding features of the whole evidence, and ought to be deeply and thoroughly considered by all who wish to understand the situation. We shall return to it in another chapter, but in the meantime shall endeavour to bring out the main features of the evidence. The difficulty is to know where to

begin and where to leave off. At no point is the witness more of a unity than here.

*In the Line.*

First let us take one or two general expressions of admiration from officers for the men who followed them. An officer with an English Territorial regiment writes : " My men at Loos, at Hohenzollern and the Craters, at Ovillers and Guedecourt, and in those unending months of trench warfare, at every moment revealed a capacity which makes our home peaceful civilian loyalties look mean. In those bloody frightful moments under bombardment or machine-gun fire, amid smashed and dying comrades, in unhesitating obedience to orders, in carrying on, in thought for comrades' safety, in dogged perseverance in the mud and rain and misery, the blind determination to stick it somehow ; in predominant cheerfulness of mood, and in fellowship, the men displayed a tacit faith far truer than perhaps they could ever express. It was displayed, too, in the daily and hourly devotion to duty or comrades, etc., in their actions, and in their thoughts or expressed ideals."

Here is another tribute from a chaplain whose paper is incisive enough as regards the men's want of power to think : " With practically everything I have read anywhere in their favour I agree. I am increasingly and incessantly astounded at their qualities. How men can go on as many of my men have now, for three years, practically, with often only four days at home during that time, under the conditions we have to face

out here, and yet remain so unchangeably cheerful, and ready to do and face anything, is something one could never have imagined in peace time."

And a chaplain with a Scottish regiment sums up his thoughts thus: "I was immensely impressed by the native grandeur of human nature. Unredeemed human nature is infinitely nobler than I had dreamed. The natural man is still a bit of rare material, capable of being moulded into something magnificent."

These are witnesses to the bearing of the combatant. Take this pæan from a colonel in command of a labour unit. (From a private letter): "I have about twenty-five per cent. of old soldiers (an old soldier's age is an average of twenty-two to twenty-three years now), and splendid fellows they are. But my daily wonder is for the other men. A more cheerful, willing, unselfish lot of men I never hope to see. Working right up to the front they are perfectly happy, sing all day, and always have a smile or a joke—only those who have been out here at the front know the halo that surrounds the simplest British soldier. All the peevishness and selfishness and churlishness of people seems burnt clean away. And with all this there is . . . an indescribable boyishness of mind and of understanding that makes them the most lovable people on God's earth, and the quaintest also. They sing their silly little songs and make their feeble little jokes and have not the faintest idea what splendid souls they are, and therein lies their great charm. They may not yet have entered the Kingdom of Heaven, but when they do, it will be as a little child."

*In Hospital.*

We have seen the British soldier in the trenches and in labour battalions. What of him in hospital? Here is the testimony of a very discriminating witness, a nurse in France: "They love giving, they bear pain patiently, they honour womanhood, they reverence goodness. The meanness and bitter party spirit which so often disfigure religious circles are lacking among them: they will shield a chum at their own expense. If they get a parcel from home they will give a share of it all round. I cannot praise sufficiently their chivalry and delicacy towards us nurses. They are generally very careful not to use bad language in a nurse's presence. Altogether their self-restraint in hospital is marvellous."

We shall close this chorus of praise with the testimony of another officer: "They are wonderful lads, for almost one and all hate war (and they are all heartily sick of this monotonously material life they lead). As a junior officer, let me say one word for the men. Our British Tommy is just wonderful—a hero! Courage, endurance, determination and cheerful endurance are all just part of him. Warm-hearted generosity and cheerful obedience are written all over him. We officers are proud of our lads and some day we may even allow ourselves to say, 'We loved them.'"

*Particular Virtues.*

The first thing to be mentioned here on account of its far-reaching influence is the intensity of group



feeling in the Army. We cannot understand either the lighter or the darker things until we have taken the measure of this. The presence of danger which can only be warded off by a common loyalty, the pressure of discipline directed towards getting men to work in the mass, and the sense of one great common cause, and common sacrifice and suffering have greatly intensified the feeling of community. The common formula for this in the Army is "We're all in it together." This has wrought mightily both for good and evil. That it has had much to do with the splendid qualities with which we are here immediately concerned is clear. Bearing this in mind, let us now turn to some of the particular virtues with which our witnesses credit the men. An often recurring note is the insistence upon the spirit of comradeship as one of the great discoveries of the war.

### *Comradeship.*

"Socially and religiously," writes an ex-combatant and chaplain with a Highland regiment, "their sense of comradeship is, I think, the biggest thing. It has been to many the unconscious actuality of the hazy, social brotherhood, in, say, Student Movement circles, before the war. Many a soldier's social gospel is summed up in the statement that he would not 'do the dirty on a pal.' That can be appealed to and developed indefinitely. They have seen the effects of good and bad influence when men are herded together, and they have learned to appreciate the self-forgetfulness that makes for comradeship. The most basal of all virtues, the heart and spring of

our religion—‘loving one’s neighbour as oneself’—is real and intelligible to-day in the trenches, and what is more, men see, if they think about it, that it is the fundamental thing in human life. It includes unselfishness, humility in the true sense of forgetting oneself, and gentleness.”

From a major of the Royal Garrison Artillery : “ I think the best thing the war has done is to make us understand the meaning of the word ‘mate.’ Friendship is possible between men, though there was precious little of it in peace time. I think we love our wives and children as much as we did, but we take far more trouble over our men friends than we used to do and we judge them, I think, by better standards, not by their respectability or their social standing, but by their power of overcoming difficulties, and getting jobs done. ‘By this shall ye know a good battery, that the gunners love one another.’ I think great zeal for some Church or other is a bar to friendship over there. . . . All I want myself after the war is to be helped to go on having good mates to share rough and smooth with. Why is it that we have to fight so in peace time, when we are such good friends at the war ? Does God really love us all ; and has He really sent us here that we may love and help one another ? Why don’t we always treat one another as if we were each loved by God Himself, as if we were immortal souls ? And the people who really believe that we are, why don’t they help us more ? Love, help, encourage and save one another— isn’t that what men are here for, and who would think it except on active service ? ”

From an officer in the Rifle Brigade : “ Active service

does bring out in a remarkable degree their strength, their sympathy with other men, their unselfishness and their cheerfulness."

From a chaplain with a Scottish regiment: "Sympathy and mutual regard, mutual understanding, have found a new scope and a new inspiration. Comradeship is the most real thing in their experience and opens up a way straight to the heart of the Gospel, to the comradeship of Christ, the ideal Friend, the Saviour. So strong is this sense of comradeship that it submerges even hereditary antagonism."

An officer in a North of Ireland regiment writes: "The men have set aside their Church conventions, and are now on a footing of good fellowship with Southern Roman Catholic Irishmen, a thing undreamed of before the war."

From a sergeant in the R.E.: "The writer has been more touched by those little nameless unremembered acts of kindness in three years of army life than in more than ten times that period of civil life. This general sharing of things, and this helping of one another, is not from a conscious reference to the Golden Rule, but to the fact that all are comrades sharing the same difficulties and passing through the same hardships together—with the absence of competition. The Churches have yet to realise the power of Friendship. Friendship out here is one of the great sacraments of life. It is an element which discomfort, trial, hardship cannot destroy—indeed these only serve to harden the cement.

"Comradeship, friendliness, brotherliness, are realities in the Army; men drawn from every station in life are knit together for a common cause in a

common fellowship. This feeling of fellowship is not in the least associated in their minds with religion as expressed by the Churches, quite the reverse, in fact ; but having experienced it they feel they have got hold of something worth keeping, and Church-people at home will do well to remember it."

Practically every paper speaks of it, and many speak of it as a great new discovery. Many emphasise in particular the heights of self-sacrifice to which the men would go for their "pals," and the beautiful sympathy with suffering which they have shown amid all the horrors of war. "They are vastly sensitive to suffering or misfortune and will sacrifice themselves to the uttermost to help a 'pal.'" But note what follows. "They perceive no connection between this tenderness and self-denial and the Christian religion."

### *Unselfishness.*

This note occurs again and again. Let us take a few instances.

From an artillery officer (R.G.A.): "The first thing that strikes one is the extraordinary cheerfulness in writing to their homes. The general view of religion is that it is something entirely separate from every-day life—at the best something to be put on on Sunday morning and cast off again in the evening—but in spite of this one can see day after day countless acts of unselfishness and self-sacrifice which show that the essence of the Christian life is there in practice if not in theory."

Here is something that deeply needs explanation. Do we find some light on it in our next quotation, from



a private in the R.A.M.C. ? “ I have been puzzled often to find men of no profession of religion exhibit such an unselfish, brave, kind and just spirit to an extent not seen in professing Christians. It is probably true of them that they are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven.”

From a chaplain : “ The men’s conduct is finer than their creed ; and their whole splendid life and death out here show that they do value ideals (though they would not admit it) above life itself.”

From a chaplain : “ The real religion of the Army is expressed in the extraordinary unselfishness of a large proportion of people, and the splendid friendship between men which helps them through. The hopeful sign is the prevalence of an ethic which is essentially Christian. There is very little hatred even of the Hun, and the wonderful cheerfulness and unselfishness which are so prevalent are part of an unwritten code of conduct.”

### *Cheerfulness.*

This extraordinary cheerfulness of the men is very frequently referred to. A Y.M.C.A. leader, working among motor transport men, writes : “ Religion the soldier has—if it is summed up in being helpful to your pals, doing your bit, keeping your troubles in your own kit-bag, and scorning grouching. The suppression of ill humour is a duty. Many are learning to endure discomfort. Self-control of body and temper is very much increased.”

From a hut worker and chaplain : “ In the hospitals I have seen a great deal to make one proud of our men,



One day I saw a man being carried to the operating theatre. 'What's wrong?' I said. 'Oh!' he replied, 'they are going to give me the Nelson touch.' They were going to remove his eye. And one could multiply such stories. But it is sufficient to say that in all the hundreds of cases I have seen, I have only come across one man who grumbled. They are terribly wounded, too, in many cases. But everything is borne with smile and chaff. I sometimes think the Master of us men must feel it was worth while dying for these men in their gaiety and courage and self-forgetfulness."

### *Sense of Duty.*

Further, there is a very strong sense of honour and duty. A captain in the R.A.M.C. writes: "Their morality might perhaps best be described as a schoolboy morality—a pretty keen perception of honour and a 'play the game' spirit."

A gunner in the H.A.C. writes: "They are quite willing to make the supreme sacrifice because of their keen sense of duty. It is a strange quality, but it is a quality which was common to certain races before the Christian era and a quality not unknown amongst non-Christian nations to-day."

Witness after witness raises this last point. What is the real source of these virtues?

A chaplain writes: "They say it is the only thing a fellow out here can do, to think of others, to see the point of view of others, to give a helping hand to others, and, if need be, to lay down life itself for others up there in the front line. . . . Christ it is, we are sure, who

prompts these Christ-like actions and ideals which every day transfigure the front line trenches."

### *Courage.*

Practically every witness emphasises the amazing *courage* of the men and their equally wonderful endurance. Journalism has made us all familiar with this. There is no longer any fear or talk of the degeneracy or softness of the youth of our country of which we heard so much before the war.

### *Sincerity and Humility.*

Sincerity and humility are referred to by not a few witnesses as characteristics of the men whom they know. "Swank" of any kind is abominated. The abounding humour of the camps is antiseptic to any kind of vanity or rodomontade. If humour is not one of the great virtues, it lies near their springs.

An officer says: "Men are living by the standards of straightness, manliness, honesty, and unselfishness. They have a hatred of sham and a fear of ridicule. The strongest power is the being with their pals, 'we're all together.'"

In reading the above paragraphs many questions must have suggested themselves to the enquiring reader. Has this noble display of the great virtues been produced by the war, by the training, the hardships, the terrible tragedies of life and death, the group feeling of men in danger? How far is the expression of the innate qualities present in all men, and how far is it Christian? How is it that the men themselves do not associate these virtues with religion? All these are questions

that press for an answer, but they cannot be adequately answered until we have completed the picture by giving some account of the limitations of the men.

## II

It would be pleasant indeed if we could consider what has been said in the previous section as a complete account of the character of the British soldier as he appears before us in the letters which we have received. It does, we believe, represent the essential man, and all that falls to be said in this section is to be regarded as telling of failings and blemishes in a character essentially sound. For this assurance we are dependent, no doubt, upon faith, but it is a faith which has a deep and reasonable foundation. We repeat, that if anyone will try the experiment for himself and ask men or officers or workers whether their experience and knowledge of the men have lowered or raised their judgment of mankind, they will in nine cases out of ten find a response in this matter that is reassuring. For after all it is those who are in daily contact with them that have the best right to speak of the fundamental basis of their character.

But to ignore the darker side in the presentment of the facts such as this volume purports to be would be to be false to the main purpose of this enquiry, the aim of which is to help towards a better condition of things. Some attempt will be made in a later chapter to account for these shadows in the picture.<sup>2</sup> Here

<sup>1</sup> See Part II., Chapter VII, "Morale and Morals." Section I.

<sup>2</sup> See same Chapter.

we shall content ourselves, in the main, with a simple presentment of what our correspondents have told us, putting the matter as far as possible in their own words.

At this point, as in all the more important matters of the inquiry, the evidence is extraordinarily uniform. Allowing indeed for the inevitable differences between military units, and for the even greater difference between the Base and the Line, it may be taken as practically unanimous.

What, then, do our correspondents say as to the main moral weaknesses and limitations of the men ? We shall begin with the less important matters first. (1) Broadly speaking, one gets from the whole mass of evidence the impression of noble self-sacrifice and of a spirit that abhors insincerity and unreality of any kind. But several witnesses refer to a curious habit of dishonesty in matters of personal property and to an unscrupulousness in minor matters of truth, which is in almost grotesque contrast with their really splendid sincerity and honour in most of the greater matters of the law. The evidence for these great qualities is incomparably more abundant than that which speaks of the spirit of thieving and deception. These dishonesties are clearly due in the main to the pressure of discipline which substitutes an artificial code of morality for a real one, and to the habit of regarding Army property as property to which they all have a right.

A chaplain of wide and varied experience writes : " A bad result of the military life is the growth of the spirit of ' wangle.' Officers and men all learn



to get what they want, not by asking for it, because they know that it would not be given, but by getting it in an underhand way. Throughout the whole Army this spirit of 'wangle' is universal; and it is so much 'the thing' that few consciences any longer condemn it even silently. It is liable to become part of the Englishman's ethical code. The head of a large wholesale house in London (himself a lieutenant) told me that on account of this spirit of 'wangle' he foresaw almost a complete breakdown of the confidence which previously existed between employers and workers and between fellow-workers. We Christian people talk as if the spirit of co-operation is going to be stronger after the war than before it, but there is undoubtedly this very strong, universal and increasing counter-tendency in the Army. The real spirit is 'each man for himself,' and *we* dare not overlook it."

A Y.M.C.A. hut worker writes: "There appears to exist a strange mixture of morals. For instance, a man will not have the slightest qualms of conscience in stealing his neighbour's blanket or rations; but in the Line the same man will endanger himself to save the life of the man he has wronged."

Those who have read "Papers from Picardy" will remember there an admirable analysis of the effect of discipline on the common property of the Army in producing this unpleasant characteristic. It is plainly accidental rather than fundamental. We give one other citation.

From a hut worker and chaplain: "Before passing from the character of the men, one must mention



their friendliness. Every man seems to be ready to hail any other as a long-lost chum. Of course, there is the other side to the shield; many are ready to consider the goods of the said long-lost chums as their own, or to 'wangle' them as the phrase goes. But the soldier is an honest mortal. I have lent to men at one time and another several hundred francs on nothing but a verbal promise of return, and none of the men have I seen before. Yet I have had all returned except  $1\frac{1}{2}$  francs. And in four months I have met only one Tommy I did not like. He did not borrow from me!"

(2) Further, the taint of profanity and unclean speech has obviously spread very widely through the armies.

A private in the R.A.M.C. writes: "Swearing is a very common sin in the Army. The recruit is not long in khaki before he understands how the term 'swear like a trooper' originated. The men who do not swear are a small minority. The majority indulge in foul, immoral, blasphemous language. The Holy Name is mixed with every foul expression."

From an officer in the Field Artillery: "They curse with all the so-called profanity conceivable. They will urge their horses through the hottest shell-fire—any moment they may be hit—and their imprecations and entreaties to their horses are the most violently profane and unclean. It is open to infer different things from this. I fear my own inference is that constant use of a sacred Name in the hottest kind of way has destroyed their susceptibility to the power that that Name once had upon them. Of course it is still possible to say, and

I hope it is true, that all this profanity is merely words and does not represent complete contempt or indifference towards the great truths of religion.

“The men almost universally use the ‘Tommy’s adjective,’ possibly the uncleanest word in the Army’s vocabulary. I fear the idea contained in it is all too full of meaning.”

From a non-commissioned officer in the Engineers :  
“Bad language very common, more so than an outsider can have any conception of. It is worse than plain ‘decent’ swearing—for most often it is the use of obscene words mixed up with the Name of the Deity and of Christ. The causes are : (1) Irritation ; (2) *à la mode* ; (3) an outlet for exasperation. And it all means nothing. It need not worry the enquiry, at least not much. It will drop away and be repulsive.”

From a chaplain and hut worker : “Swearing is, of course, greatly increased. It means nothing, and, personally, I do not think it is doing any harm except when it is coupled with obscenity. But under heavy fire and high velocity shells, a man may be excused saying many things. You have to be in it to know what it means.”

From an officer in a New Zealand regiment : “It is often stated that language is a matter of habit and no real index of character. I am able to believe this as far as most of the monotonous reiterations of civil and military life are concerned. I make, however, one exception. The language of fornication—the characteristic of the whole Army so far as I know—seems to me to strike too close to the heart of things, too lightly at the most serious battle each healthy man has to

fight, to escape condonement. Filthy language to me represents a moral descent. . . .

“The wrong man has inside running. . . . The prevailing weakness is expressed, it seems to me, and is measured by the filth. I believe that the test of civilisation is to be found in its attitude towards women. Weaknesses not confined to the uneducated. Fault lies with officers and N.C.O.’s as well as men.”

A report from one of the great French bases puts as its first item in the list of limitations the profane and filthy language: “The habit is infectious, and even men of high principle find it difficult to resist. The words seem to be used, as a rule, quite independently of their connotation. There is comparatively little telling of obscene stories. As one man put it, ‘There are few essentially rotten minds.’”

These testimonies might be multiplied, but it would be to little use.

It is reassuring to be told that nurses and women workers rarely hear such language, and then as a rule only by accident. Our standards of speech at home, as in graver matters than those of language, have been wrought out by the common influence of both sexes. When the influence of women is almost completely withdrawn it is perhaps not surprising that there should be a reversion to coarser standards. Very many of the witnesses qualify what they have told us by assuring us that very much less is meant by the language itself than would superficially appear.

(3) The habit of gambling is frequently referred to by our correspondents as very prevalent throughout the Army. But, as a matter of fact, gambling on the larger

scale is prohibited by Army Regulations, the only game of hazard allowed in camp being the game of "house." Everyone who has walked through a camp on a summer evening will know to how great an extent this game prevails.

But in general few details are given regarding gambling, though it is very frequently referred to. To allow it in its extremer forms would obviously be impossible for any army which felt the need of maintaining its spirit of *camaraderie*.

(4) On the whole our correspondents say less about drunkenness than might have been expected by anyone familiar with the ravages of this vice in the nation as a whole.

Still there is a great deal of an alarming kind. It is perfectly clear that the excessive use of drink is one of the chief causes of that which is by far the darkest stain, the prevalence of sexual immorality. Indeed it is mainly in this connection that it appears in our evidence, the rigour of military discipline not being exerted against it to the same extent as in the case of gambling.

The wet canteen is a recognised Army institution, while the Y.M.C.A. and Church huts are only there on sufferance.

A chaplain with a West of Scotland regiment (city) writes: "Then they think very lightly of the habit of drunkenness. The younger men do not tipple. (That is a middle-aged vice.) But they believe it quite a respectable and natural thing to get royally drunk on occasion. It seems to them a way of working off a mood of reaction which has a good deal to be said for it.



They seem to think it the best way of getting intense enjoyment out of hours of relaxation. I suppose this is due really to lack of intellectual and æsthetic development."

(5) We come now to what is the darkest and most tragic element in this chapter, and clearly also the gravest evil among our men. There is probably more about it in our papers than about all the other evils put together—the sin of immorality. Here again we must let our correspondents speak for themselves. They are almost quite unanimous in the matter. But it is quite clear also that we must distinguish fundamentally between battalions in the Line and battalions in the Base camps. The Line was a very much cleaner place than the Base. At the Bases we have had the conditions of barrack towns at home reproduced, with the immense accentuation of the evil which is caused by the absence of their own women folk, and by the reaction of a population essentially civilian against the restraints of discipline in almost intolerable monotony and its frequent exasperation. We must add to this also in the case of many units the extreme reaction from the nervous tension and excitement of the Line, the presence of licensed facilities for vice, and the almost incredible temptation to which the men are subjected under these conditions by the cunning and shameless ingenuity of those who make a trade of vice.

In reading all this evidence we have to remember constantly that we are dealing with men who have been placed under monstrously abnormal conditions, and therefore that what we are considering is not only moral evil but human pathology. But by whatever



name we call it the results are disastrous. They point to radical defects alike in our methods of home education and of Church teaching, which it is absolutely vital that we at home should realise in order that we may set our house in order.

We begin our quotations with one from a chaplain with a West of Scotland regiment (city), the rest of whose paper is full of appreciation of the nobler qualities of the men: "As to the question of purity, I have very sad impressions. They argue that sexual indulgence is natural and therefore legitimate. They combine a very affectionate and respectful attitude to their own women with this utterly different attitude to the women who are available for indulgence. Their minds are pretty filthy. They have never been schooled to the battle for chastity, and their talk is pretty often disgusting.

"In fact we have not yet learnt the way in which to train our young men in purity, and it is time we faced the fact. Moreover, I do not think that there is anything to pick and choose between the classes in this matter. 'Varsity men seem to me quite as bad as labourers."

From an officer in an East of Scotland regiment (city): "The Army takes no account of a man's moral character so long as he is brave, and observes the Army Act and the King's Regulations. . . . There will be difficulties for Society arising out of the almost universal decline of public opinion with regard to sexual morals. Impurity, I should almost be impelled to say, especially with regard to literature, art, and conversation, is the rule in the Army; purity the exception. The opinion of Society on these matters, judging from

my experience in the Army, I should say is frankly pagan, and not Christian at all. The lack of restraint and reserve since the war among women who were previously modest and respectable is an especially conspicuous and regrettable fact. It appears that there is need that the Church should head a crusade to purge the nation of its impurity and vice, and should insist above all things that the problems of prostitution and venereal diseases should be drastically dealt with.

“I should say that as a result of the war, and in view of the relaxation of restraints which normally act in civil Society, itself also unsettled, there is no inconsiderable danger of a period having begun which will be marked by a low moral tone in certain matters, and by vicious excess.”

From a minister, a hut worker at a base in France :  
“I lament exceedingly that I can only give a gloomy report as to the standards of sex morality. Some men are living pure Christian lives under circumstances of great difficulty and temptation, but a large proportion fall into gross sin, without any serious realisation either of the physical results or the moral issues involved. I feel strongly that far more attention should be given to inculcating higher standards of sex morality, both in churches and Sunday-schools, and also elsewhere. That much of this degradation is due to the peculiar and unnatural conditions of Army life I have no doubt at all. It is to be regretted that in so many cases there is a distinct laxity in this connection among the higher authorities, due to the notion that immorality is natural and inevitable, and that the only thing to do is to try to minimise the ill effects on the military efficiency of

the men. The evil attains its gravest development at the bases rather than up the Line."

From a sergeant in the R.A.M.C. : " In matters of sex, I think men are very lax. I think as a race we British are a rough lot in this way ; the average view is that a man is entitled to do what a woman may not. Education is greatly to blame for this. The wretched prudery of our system passes over one of the great forces of life ; we are ashamed as a nation to talk of things, and newspapers talk of the ' hidden plague ' instead of calling it syphilis. As the whole subject is tabooed, the consequence is that young men get most of their ideas and ideals from the drinking-shops and smoke-rooms, and they get their knowledge of sex from the same places too."

From a chaplain who formerly served in the ranks : " No one who has lived the life of a soldier in France can doubt but that impurity is the gravest problem the Churches have to face. Many fine lads have ruined themselves through self-indulgence in this direction. For months together the men are in places where it is impossible for them to get hold of women-folk. Then they are dumped within reach of places where there are red lamps officially controlled and many houses not so controlled. ' No one at home will know if they go in and they will only go in once to see what it is like. A chap must sow his wild oats, There is no danger etc., etc.' So they talk to themselves. Years of indulgence in unclean thoughts, often years of self-abuse, weaken their powers of resistance, and so they go under. As a result of a first call they lose a most priceless boon—self-respect. Fear of consequences

keeps some men from going to these places. Love of home and early training steady the majority (the big majority) of men, but very many fall. Then, too, even where men have no contact with women they talk 'smut' so habitually that their minds of necessity become sorely polluted. They have had little or no training in such problems. They do not realise that no man can afford to give house room to unclean thoughts, and so the door is opened and kept open. What amazed me most was to find that very often there was but little 'moral sense' on the matter. Had I time I could tell some pitiable stories that men had told me. Many men who go to 'ordered' disorderly houses have no sense of shame.

"What is the Church going to do in the matter? It is wicked, damnably wicked, that our lads through ignorance should be allowed to slip into sins which in themselves are deadly, but which also open the door to deadlier sins. To tell a young lad that it is naughty to say 'damn,' it is wicked to go to a theatre, and not to arm him against self-abuse is a crime. For the Church to sit tight because the problem is a delicate one or to excuse herself by saying it is a father's duty is shameful. . . . We make our sex problem by our neglect of sane sex-education. A young man who has indulged himself secretly for years is comparatively helpless in face of the temptations which face a man in France and in the East. I cannot here make suggestions. This is the greatest moral problem of all. What attitude will the Church take if and when the suggestion of legislation in England is made?"

From a minister, a hut worker with the Salonica



Forces : " The moral weaknesses of the men are inevitable almost (owing to conditions of life, etc.). The men on Gallipoli had an intelligible craving for pickles. Drunkenness, immorality are another form of pickles. The virile body craves excitement, titillation, and because the temptations are so strong and so intelligible to everyone in the Army, surrender to them is condoned. Sins of the body are not felt to be disgraceful. The cheeriest bunch of men I ever met perhaps were patients in a venereal hospital at Marseilles.

" The profanity of the Army has its root here too. Public opinion in the Army does not condemn a man for drunkenness, impurity, or profanity. It does not condemn him because of its sense of the conditions of his life. Cowardice, selfishness, snobbishness, tyranny—these are the *bêtes noires*."

From a hut worker and chaplain : " The sex question is here very much to the fore. Men who have been shut off from the sight of women for months in the trenches are in abnormal conditions, and are, therefore, in an abnormal state. One man said to me that the most glorious moment in all his experience was when he woke to consciousness in a base hospital, and saw the face and smile of a woman and heard her voice, and the rustle of her skirt. I can quite understand him, and also see what it means in temptation to go with the type that are often most accessible. Men are far more chivalrous than usual, more ready to reverence and worship all that is pure and gracious in womanhood, but they are also much more ready to relax all self-control and yield to any craving for excitement or desire. They have a hair



trigger constitution for the moment, and the slightest movement may turn them one way or the other. The worst agony and aftermath of the War will be found in the heritage we reap from those that go down."

Very much of the above evidence, it will be seen, is from the camps and bases. Here is another from a chaplain of experience with men in the Line: "At the Front, sexual immorality was not common among the officers and almost unknown amongst the men. This was not entirely due to virtue, for the men would cheer a filthy song to the echo, and several chaplains besides myself were surprised at the barefaced way in which such songs would be brought out at public concerts. I am perfectly certain about the above facts as regards my own brigade. I can well believe it was different at the bases."

Much more to the same general effect as what has been above written could be added from the evidence. Read in the mass, as it has been written in the above chapter, it must be remembered that what has been said is only true of a certain proportion of the officers and men. That there is a great number of both in the Army whose conduct is above reproach in spite of all the fierce temptations of their lives, is beyond doubt. What the proportions are it is, of course, impossible to say. It is reassuring to know from more than one highly competent witness that Army experience as a whole does not leave on their minds the impression that the majority of the men are deeply tainted by the infection. But that for the time being the mischief is exceedingly grave cannot be doubted.

It is a good sign in this connection that the men

everywhere show the greatest respect and consideration for the nurses and women hut workers who labour among them. As is well known, the general relations of the men with the W.A.A.C.'s have been admirable, which would certainly not have been the case if there had been any radical corruption.

In this chapter we have looked, first, at the lights and then at the shadows of the picture. For the sake of distinctness we have dealt with each characteristic separately. But for the sake of reality we have to make clear to ourselves that the whole is fused and blended together in one astonishing whole. We are not describing two different classes of men in this chapter, but, to a large extent at least, two aspects of the same humanity.

That we may be reminded of this before we pass on to other topics, let us hear the witness of a private in the R.A.M.C. :

“I had better say that this paper will deal only with 80 per cent. of the men; the few definite Christians and well-educated each need a volume to themselves, as the worst also do! We have changed much since we came out here. There has been a great levelling up. We are nearer unity and union. The lowest whom we despised have proved themselves heroes in danger, and we are, in a sense, glad to be a ‘pal,’ though not a ‘friend,’ of So and so, who drinks every penny, and who visits immoral houses once a week, for he has shown us that there is another side to him; he will silently go through fire for a pal, and in danger we are all pals, officers, N.C.O.'s and

men alike. We used to loathe him in England, we dare not do so now, for we feel that in many respects we are inferior to him. And the best have had all their pride taken from them ; when they shrank and calculated in dangers, the drunkard and swine never hesitated. . . .” He goes on to speak further of the average man in the “ 80 per cent.,” and sums up thus :—“ Yet there is room for tremendous hope. These men are all right at heart. When they have realised that Christ is, indeed, their great champion of right against wrong, their hero of heroes, the bravest, straightest, most loving man who ever played the game, then they will respond to Him. They are ready ; I have seen their hearts ; on the barrack square at ———, through two and a quarter years’ wandering in France, in old barns, dug-outs, trenches : in our hospital wards to which they come dazed and benumbed with rain, mud, cold, German shells and trench mortars of the Ypres trenches ; dust, dirt, vermin, septic sores, sleeplessness and weariness in the awful battles last summer. I have seen them go into battle, and have tended them as they lay helpless on the stretchers, and carried them to the mortuaries after they have died. And I have seen them behind the Line in the towns while we have been ‘ on rest ’—sometimes drunk, immoral, foul and filthy ; sick in hospital ; and at their best in their football matches. I have experienced their unselfishness, their humility, their absolute hatred of any kind of hypocrisy or sham—and I feel that in the words of the hymn, they are waiting, ‘ stretched the hand and strained the sight,’ for God. They are *men* ; that is certain ;

otherwise they could not bear so patiently their sufferings and their wounds. They cover their best and deepest thoughts by the 'bluff' of most marvellous language!—livid in all the colours of horrible-ness; and sing rag-time even while 'sewing up' a dead man. It is not that they have no decent feelings, but that they regard it as a weakness to show them."

Another chaplain of wide experience sums up his impressions as follows:—

"I feel pretty clear about two things. The first is not very illuminating, but it is true. It is that nothing is so strong in sway over the souls of British men in arms as *what others think*. Nothing is stronger than the reluctance to set yourself up to be better than others. Army life fosters the herd instinct, the sticking-together frame of mind. It breeds endless tolerance. You never round on a mate. He is your mate. You are *in it* with him. It is not your business to improve him—that is the business of the blokes above. I was struck the other day when I picked up a driver who had been stunned by a fall from a horse—as he struggled back to a muddled consciousness he muttered, 'Eh, but the lads will laff at me for this.'

"The great (and noble though exaggerated) association of religion with morality makes the dread of the lads laughing at being pious or goody-goody intensely operative. I think this sort of trade-unionism in the ranks creates a more melancholy impression as to general morals than is actual. Underneath a general tolerance and go as you please and absence of protest is a lot of sound stuff. It is covered over. Yet



given decent counter-attractions—games, entertainment and salvation from obvious temptation—a great mass of men keep right, or at any rate do not sin in act.

“The *home* is enshrined in their hearts. That is as strong a conviction as they have. It makes one realise perpetually how much *women* have in their hands, and how males are sinned against.

“It is hard to diagnose rightly. I know that some very good chaplains in the *par excellence* ‘smart’ (socially) division out here—chaplains who had got pretty intimate too—were very distressed by the callous matter of coarseness of public opinion among officers as to pre-marital continence. . . .

“This matter of coarseness and general acceptance and toleration of incontinence is bound up with the noticeable lack of social solidarity in our nation. Roughly speaking, a Britisher if he is comfortable himself cares very little about Lazarus or Magdalene at his door. He is not socially sensitive. . . .

“The ‘matter of course’ view is accompanied, I think, increasingly by the opinion that a State Licensed System is the best practical and public solution of the problem.

“There is very little knowledge of the cruelty of the Prostitution system. Men who would not seduce a girl will accept the fact of prostitutes being *there* ready for their use. . . .

“With such things in mind I hold to an optimistic view on the whole. I cannot overlook the fine look on so many faces. There are many royal-looking lads about. I salute them with my soul as with my



hand. Yet though I am no optimist in the matter, nor, I think, an inhabitant of a fools' paradise, I cannot speak too strongly on the intensity of the need of this mass of wonderful but frail males for real possessing conviction and relationship with God and unashamed conscious loyalty to goodness and healthy fun to save them from themselves.

"I cling to the belief that there is a great mass of healthy manhood out here. I do not think we ought to overlook the fine record of the men as regards good behaviour in French villages behind the Line. Curés and French mothers when I have asked them have been loud in praise of the 'garçons.' I believe it is true that the French villagers would rather have our troops billeted on them than their own."

## ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER IX

#### POINTS OF CONTACT

The enquiry aimed particularly at discovering what aspects of Christianity appeal most to the men.

*Evidence : The Reality and Power of God.*

Men's sense of God's reality increased : open to instruction on Providence and the war.

*Trench Fatalism.*

Fatalism of a kind almost universal : different interpretations of this.

The belief in Fate of the fighting man seems due to practical necessity rather than intellectual conviction. It is akin to the elementary religious convictions and should be met with Christian teaching.

*The Value of Prayer.*

*Evidence :* Prayer in danger : difficulties about this : prayer not often a regular habit.

*Fellowship.*

This new spirit needs Christian interpretation : is a new point of appeal for the Gospel.

*Holy Communion.*

Communion before battle : varying views as to men's attitude to it : distinction again between Base and Line.

*The Kingdom of God.*

We have here practically no response ; men seem to have no idea that Christianity has a gospel for humanity.

*Foreign Missions.*

The evidence under this head is remarkable.

*Evidence :* Surprising interest in lectures on World Mission ; men get new idea of Christianity.

## CHAPTER IX

### POINTS OF CONTACT

ALL who have to do with the teaching of religious truth know that very much of the success of the preacher depends upon his being able to enter into the mind of the pupil, to divine the things that he is feeling after for the development of his own personal life, and to present to him that aspect of the truth which his stage of development enables him to take home.

In considering, therefore, as we must needs do, how the spiritual anarchy, created and revealed by the war, can be transcended, and men brought to accept the Christian interpretation of life and dedicate themselves to the Kingdom of God, we are brought inevitably to enquire what are the aspects and truths of Christianity that have been found to appeal most to the men who have been passing through the furnace of the war.

Our correspondents were asked to use liberty in giving their impressions, but certain themes were suggested to them as typical.

We give the results :

(1) *The Reality and Power of God.*

A large number of our correspondents have fastened upon this topic as cardinal.<sup>1</sup> Let us hear a few of them.

From a chaplain with a Highland regiment: "One man writing in a battalion said in so many words that though he and others thought far less of doctrinal issues and the things the Churches wrangle about, they felt that the last shreds of materialism had been knocked out of them. In fact they had been up against naked reality and know that they need God. I found an amazing difference in the response given to my work as a chaplain when they had been for a while at the Front. Men and officers became really eager to have services. And I never had such a sense anywhere else that while I talked about the great truths my audience was in close touch and sympathy with me. . . . Yes, certainly the Front has increased the sense men had of God's reality and power. A whole group of men told me this once, and other groups subsequently confirmed it."

From a chaplain with a Highland regiment, mainly rural: "The men have been up against the great realities of life, and there are only a few things that matter. They are very much more able to appreciate the teaching of Christ, 'Take no thought for your life what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, and for your body what ye shall put on . . . for your Heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and

<sup>1</sup> Their testimony should be taken in supplement to what is written in the first two chapters.

His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you' . . . Instead of the multitude of little things that fill up life at home, out there one sooner or later finds the world empty of all but life and death and God, and religion comes to its true place. As things were, the war was almost worth it for that alone. That ought to be the real crisis and new standing point."

From an officer in the R.G.A. : " There is no problem, no policy, no need for anything but faith. Give us contact in a daily life with a Living God, with our Father. We all want Him sorely, whether we know there is such an One or no. We have grown callous over our heartache, but once let us grow alive again, what a widespread cry for Him there would be ! Men are sound enough at the bottom, and are not readily satisfied with position or wealth or comfort or victory."

From a stretcher-bearer with a Highland regiment : " I believe greater results would be obtained if the love and power of God were preached more."

From a hut worker in France. " The whole question of God's providence in relation to human life commands their attention, and it is when one touches on the present bearing of religion to their needs that they listen most keenly. A merely historic message has not much interest for them."

From a chaplain in France, experience of hospital work and of service with a Highland regiment on the Line : " The men are specially susceptible to religious or other influences—like comradeship—which help to brace them for the struggle. . . . They are specially open to instruction regarding Providence and the war.



Most are, in a measure, small or great, puzzled and perplexed by the war, and any real illumination is gladly hailed and welcomed."

From an officer in a Highland regiment: "The reality and power of God is the best point of all, provided it is shown to be a real live power, an everyday, every moment reality, not only presented by a privileged class of paid teachers, who by reason of their cloth seldom share the dangers and trials of everyday life."

From a Committee at a Home base we have the following: "The men are specially interested in hearing such questions discussed as these: The Relation of Omnipotence to the Moral Government of the World. Are men loved separately and personally by God or only *en masse*? The Committee add, 'We can safely affirm there is an increased responsiveness to religious teaching on the Reality, Presence, and Love of God.' Such sentences as these appear in the reports: 'There is an extraordinarily vivid sense of God. G. has grown tremendously sure of God.'"

From a chaplain comes the significant sentence: "In moments of danger and stress undoubtedly God becomes real to them, but their idea of God is so far from the Christian idea as to be of little help to them when they get back to rest billets and out of danger."

From a missionary, a hut worker: "I think belief in the power of God has increased. With that, of course, there is the fatalistic attitude which is so prominent, and which I should hesitate to call a Christian fatalism, belief in the sovereignty of God."

From a chaplain with North of England troops

mainly miners : “Theologically most of the men are temporarily fatalists. That seems far enough away from the faith of Christianity. And yet may it not serve in some measure to redress the balance in our modern theology ? A new emphasis on the sovereignty of God is surely indicated here.”

From a chaplain : “In preaching I have never attempted to be popular. Whenever I have preached about God I have always had the attention of the men.”

### *Trench Fatalism.*

Reference has already been made in the last section to the widely prevalent fatalism of the soldier. The sudden appearance of this among men who have never given any indication in their civilian life of any tendency in that direction is one of the most interesting and remarkable of all the minor phenomena of the war. We shall take a few extracts illustrating the nature of this belief.

From a Y.M.C.A. worker of experience in France : “Nearly all the men are fatalists—‘If there is one for you you’ll get it.’ ‘If your number is on it,’ etc.”

From a private in a North Country regiment : “Most of the men are fatalists or materialists in so far as they believe that if it is their fate to get shot they will be shot. They do their duty and put their faith in luck.”

Many witnesses might be quoted to a similar effect, some of them saying that practically all the men are fatalists.

From an officer in a Cheshire and South Lancashire

regiment : " When in a tight corner, or with a big ordeal in front of them, a very large number of men do feel that they want some strength outside themselves to keep them going. . . . The large majority of them simply fall back on a sort of inarticulate cry to some Being whom they call God, that they may come through safely. . . . But besides this religion, due to fear, which is after all one known cause, and not an unworthy one, driving men to seek God, there is in many men's minds a simple dependence on God, the clear relic of their days in Sunday-school. This comes out especially in their letters. Apart from the definitely religious ones, there are dozens which close with ' God bless you,' or praying that God may keep the mites safe, a piety which may not go very deep, but is nevertheless a foundation. There is a third type which often accompanies the other two, and is neither more nor less religious. It is the kind of fatalism practically every man who has fought in this war must regard as his property. It is not a blind declaration of ' Kismet,' nor is it, except in a few cases, a feeling of being in God's hands for good or ill, but rather it is an active philosophy, that if there is a bullet made for you, it will get you some time. It is only a philosophy like this, heathenish though it sounds, that enables many men to stick it." Many witnesses speak of the current phrases which were in frequent vogue throughout all the Army : " If your name is on the shell you will get it," " What has to be maun be," " I am a bit of a fatalist, I am," " My time has not come yet," " His number was up," and soon. Several say that this feeling was universal, and all agree that it was widely spread.

Our correspondents differ a good deal in their interpretation of this sudden apparition of an ancient creed. Some associate it simply with current materialism. Some associate with it the remarkable popularity of Omar Khayyám among the better educated men. Several are struck by its resemblance to the fighting creed of Islam, and one Scottish Presbyterian chaplain thinks it due to a re-awakening of the Calvinism which has been the hereditary creed of Scotland.

One officer in a Scottish Highland regiment, in a striking paper on "Trench Religion," seems to trace it to the subduing of the human spirit by the terrific display of mechanical force. "The comradeship with Death is the most potent but not the only circumstance of the battlefield which alters the spiritual balance. The limbo of the soldier's vaguer feeling is intensely coloured by a sense of unspeakable impotence in the face of gigantic forces of destruction. Nowhere, as in a great army, does a man's littleness and unimportance stare on him so startlingly. Nowhere, as on a battlefield, is there such evidence of the powerlessness of the mightiest human organisation to protect his own small individuality. A millimetre's deflection in the laying of a gun is the difference between life and death to him. He knows how a shell will burst between two men, blowing one to pieces, yet leaving the other unhurt and amazed. He has crouched in holes in the earth, with earthy smells in his nostrils, and listened to the hum of a thousand unseen menaces under the placid stars. What eats into his soul is the knowledge that all this violence is blind. Chance rules as an autocrat in the metropolis of our most



perfect mechanism. Is it strange that the child of these conditions should be a thorough fatalist? Most men are familiar already with the soldier's catchword, 'If there is a bullet with your name on it you'll get it.' History would seem to stamp such fatalism as the best seed ground for martial virtues, as the history of Islam will bear witness. At the same time it is always theistic; and withal the most empty of moral content. Such are its tendencies at the Front, and here is the chief matter for consideration. The soldier's God is once more the God of Battles, who clothes Himself with the storm. He is not the judge of righteousness and wrong, not the friend of the fatherless and the widow's protector, not holy, or just, or good, but simply the controller of all the forces of Nature which burst from the little grasp of man; the Lord of Fate and the Master of Life and Death. It is worthy of remark in this connection that when a recruit swears the military oath and hands over to the hierarchy of the Army the direction of his action, he divests himself thereby of a considerable part of his moral responsibility. Freedom and responsibility stand or fall together, and when part of a man's accustomed liberty goes, what remains of his responsibility is apt to be considerably damaged by association. What a man needs beyond his own power to command he seeks from Providence, and the soldier's prayer is for protection, for strength, for perennial spring of inspiration to courage. His God is one who can supply all these."

A major of artillery strikes a similar note. He writes: "Now I could almost guarantee that all who have been through a shelled area, or in a battery position



whilst it is being shelled, would be puzzled to death with wonderment and awe at the very real presence and protective power of what is called 'Luck.' But that which is called 'Luck' in the Line has not the same content, and is by no means the same thing as that which is called 'Luck' in the Casino. The men's attitude towards it is very different. It seems to negate all that is taught about the nature and effect of bursting shell."

Let us take another illustration of this thought, from a sergeant in the Royal Engineers. "You will go West when your number is up. Everything out here seems to be in the hands of Fate. Two men enlist together in the same regiment. One is chosen for Headquarters work, and the other goes to the trenches. Two men standing side by side leap over the top—one is taken—'his number was up'—the other is left. After all 'his number's up' may be only a soldier's way of expressing the truth, 'My times are in Thy hands.'"

True as this analysis is up to a certain point, it is not exhaustive. It needs to be supplemented by another thought. That thought is tersely expressed by a lance-corporal in the Royal Engineers: "Soldiers are fatalists; otherwise they would be madmen."

Another, an officer in a West Country regiment, adds: "Fatalism is a good antidote to steady a man's nerves in danger."

We seem to get here to the roots of the matter. The belief in Fate does not seem to be ultimately due to an intellectual conviction that the powers which rule human life and battle are material and blind, but to

the practical necessity, if one is going to get one's work done and maintain one's reason, of believing that one's fate is controlled by an over-ruling power. The man throws off his personal cares on the nature of things, on a power mightier than exploding mine and bursting shell. Fatalism was a fighting creed long before the days of high explosives. It nerved Islam in its tremendous career of conquest, and in its Calvinistic form it put iron in the blood of Puritan and Huguenot. One remembers, too, the faith in his destiny and "star" of the greatest soldier of modern times. In other words, in this strange reappearance of faith in predestination, in an age which had apparently forgotten the word, we seem to have, in however obscure and even perverted a form, something which reminds us of our Lord's own words, "the very hairs of your head are all numbered; fear ye not therefore; . . . seek ye first the Kingdom of God."

We must get some explanation of the trench fatalism of to-day which will bring it into line with the apparition of the same thing under similar conditions in past ages in human history, for phenomena so startlingly akin surely indicate the same enduring cause. By the radical constitution of our mortal nature we are not made to carry the whole burden of our own spirits. If we are to preserve our sanity in moments of uttermost tension we must have some greater power on whom we can throw the burden. We must either throw it upon Nature or upon God. Surely we are here near the deep primitive springs of all religion, that sense of dependence on a greater Being which alone can make us independent of the world.

(2) *The Value of Prayer.*

From a chaplain with a Highland regiment (city) :  
“ I do not know much about this apart from the fact referred to above, that men pray under the stress of acute danger. I found some men in difficulty about prayer. Did it keep a man safe in battle ? The facts did not seem to bear this out, though some of the Psalms seemed to promise it.”

From a chaplain, hospital experience : “ The value of prayer is a memory of childhood which most men retain, and to which they turn in time of crisis. More men pray than ever kneel at their bedside, but the habit has often failed to grow up. It remains childish and often has a touch of superstition about it. There is often little consciousness of God in it.”

From a chaplain, experience at the Base and of a Highland regiment in the Line : “ Prayer as a natural impulsive cry for help and security has greatly increased. Prayer as a habit of the soul, as a living fellowship with a living God, regulated and developed, is much less apparent. Most men say their prayers before going into action. Some who come out safe never say them again till next time they are in like danger. But some do, and make prayer a habit. Even in the others you have an experience to appeal to, a point of contact from which to work.”

From an officer in a Highland regiment : “ The value of prayer is a point to be emphasised by all who preach to soldiers. I am sure if it became thought of as an everyday, every moment possibility, prayer could be made a great help to the men,”

From a private: "They value prayer, but do not pray as a little child to God. They pray to an Unseen Power whom they know and feel is there. I think the whole story of the New Testament sort of slips away into the background. They do not connect it directly with Christ, but the Lord's Prayer is on men's lips all the time."

From a sergeant in the R.A.M.C.: "Very few men really pray or know what prayer is. 'It was a hot place. I tell you I said my prayers,' is a remark frequently heard. It means little more than the acknowledgment of the habit of mind which regards religion as a kind of salvationism. Yet few who have known what a moment's turning to God in times of stress at the Front means—the reassurance and relief that comes from a glimpse of spiritual values while the material are crumbling around you—will forget the experience. During the 'hot moments' it is the prayers already said in times of quiet and concentration that count; a man depends then on whatever strength he has established for himself in the past."

From a sergeant in the Royal Engineers: "Prayer scarcely exists, at least definite stated prayer, neither for himself nor for him who calls him friend. Few soldiers in company would kneel down and visibly pray, not because they dare not, but because it would savour to them of spiritual swank. But if anxious thought for those at home is a prayer on their behalf; if each kindly deed is a prayer for one's mate, then indeed is the throne of the heavenly grace literally besieged with clamorous petitions."

From a sergeant in a North of England regiment;



“Prayer amongst those who pray has become an all-powerful and inspiring force. Without the prayers of others one wonders what would have happened. And day by day one’s strength has lain in the knowledge of the ever ready help the prayers of loving ones have supplied continually.”

From a private in the R.A.M.C.: “Perhaps 30 per cent. pray consciously at ordinary times; 1 per cent. kneels to pray; 50 per cent. pray occasionally; 75 per cent. pray in extreme danger. Unless I should have given the impression that my pals are cowards who cringe to God in danger, let me say they are not. Before I came out I was told that hundreds kneeled to pray before a charge. They do *not*. It would not be playing the game to get drunk last night and pray this, unless a man is really converted, and I have met very few who have been really converted out here. But he prays—something simple—‘God keep me,’ etc., inwardly. He forgets it afterwards, but he means it at the time. He knows he is a publican and sinner, and like him of the Gospel simply says ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’”

### (3) *Fellowship.*

We have seen that nothing has so enriched the life of the men as the new spirit of comradeship which has developed under the conditions of Army life. Hence one of the best lines of approach is afforded by the subject of Fellowship.

From a chaplain with a Highland regiment (city): “A new sense of the value and power of fellowship has been perhaps the outstanding effect of life at the



Front. The same remark applies to the need for unselfishness. A really selfish man is regarded as a sweep at the Front."

From another chaplain with a Highland regiment (rural): "I am not sure that, unconsciously, the soldier has not got more real Christianity than we realise. What he wants is interpretation. By Christianity I do not mean the Church's expression of Christianity in doctrine and creed. I mean that, taking the simple virtues and truths that are the heart and spring of our religion, the soldier is much more nearly giving them a true place. The most basal of all, loving one's neighbour as oneself, is real and intelligible to-day in the trenches. And what is more, men see, if they think about it, that that is the fundamental thing in human life. It includes unselfishness, humility in the true sense of self-forgetting and gentleness. These the soldier has seen; but he is so used to Christianity as a formal expression that he hardly realises that these are of the very spirit of Christ. You can take any simple expression of that spirit and apply it straight to the soldier's life and he understands; whereas he listens to the customary phrases and doctrines as so many words. Given interpretation, the situation is tremendously hopeful. The possibilities in sacrifice, the need for God, the certainty born of close acquaintance that death is not the end, all these and more are part of the soldier's uninterpreted consciousness. . . . Unselfishness and fellowship (comradeship) he knows all about if one puts it the right way. That is his discovery. Along with it I would say the contentment that comes from doing the right thing, *e.g.*, the

cheeriness of the soldier ; it is not all ' our national temperament.' ”

From a nurse : “ Many of the men are willing now to come to church and be brought into touch with religion, but they want simple, definite, sympathetic teaching, not vague platitudes. They have often learned something of the reality of God, the value of prayer, the meaning of fellowship and self-sacrifice and the Life to Come. They are very easily repelled by formalism and insincerity, and they need personal friendship and care. If the Church has nothing to offer these men but husks, surely God will require their blood at her hands.”

From an Assistant Chaplain-General at one of the French bases : “ Unselfishness and a spirit of fellowship seem parts of the men's nature, but the connection between these and Christianity as they understand it does not occur to them.”

From a hut worker, V.A.D. experience in France and England : “ I find it difficult to express in ordinary words what I feel about the selfless comradeship of the men. You speak, in your statement, as if the discovery of this were a gratifying but minor point, or at least minor from the point of view of your enquiry. I cannot think it is. To me the spectacle of it is the greatest fact of the war and is alive (maybe not full-grown) in all these hearts. The men speak themselves of it as of something that has come upon them in the misery and danger. This is the principle of comradeship, that the man next you, not because you like him or he is your chosen friend, but just because he needs it, is to be cared for just as

if he was yourself ; his cold, his hunger, his helplessness, his need of a cigarette, are satisfied as if they were an extension of your own personality. There is no difference really between him and you. This is what gives one an idea of the suffering in France and Flanders, the terrible strength with which this principle is beaten into their minds. But this does not remain a mere stoic principle ; it is paid back in gratitude and begets love and comradeship. Therefore I think it is a new point of appeal for the Gospel. I believe the men's experience of this will lead them to understand the Love of God, the Life of Jesus, the Cross, the Kingdom of God. I have several times been struck with the fact that terrible suffering seems to bring before the men, not the problem of evil, nor any complaint of bitterness towards God or man, but the will to achieve a moral victory. One I remember especially who revealed in delirium that his only thought was for courage and dignity in pain, ' I've stood it wi' patience.' I think this attitude must be the point of contact for much Christian doctrine."

From an officer writing in hospital : " The need for unselfishness is probably the greatest lesson men will have learned from the war. Once universally learned it is a lesson that contains the redemption of the whole human race. If religion could be identified with this in the mind of the average man he would be no longer indifferent."

From a chaplain, experience at the Base with a Highland regiment : " Sympathy and mutual understanding have found a new scope and a new inspiration. Comradeship is the most real thing in their experience

and opens up a way straight to the heart of the Gospel, to the comradeship of Christ, the ideal Friend."

From a chaplain with a Scottish regiment: "A new reality in brotherhood is one of the supreme discoveries the men have made. One could give many examples. Men as a matter of course made it easier for one another, helped one another, shared with one another. Brotherhood was a big reality. It was this that made the life possible amid dirt, danger and discomfort—they had discovered the priceless blessing of fellowship."

From a chaplain and afterwards a religious work director, Y.M.C.A., French Base: "There is no need that they discover the need for unselfishness. They are unselfish past imagining. I could give instance after instance from my observation. They are mightily convinced of the need for fellowship. Britain will learn that politically after the war. The Church had better learn it now."

#### (4) *Holy Communion.*

From a chaplain with a Scottish Highland regiment (city): "Like most padres, I found them rather anxious to have Communion now and then, especially before going into battle, but it is simply impossible to say anything definite about this desire. In some it means everything that we could wish it to mean; in others it is indubitably a superstitious feeling. They believe that having taken Communion they will be safe. My impression about Communion in general is that the laity on the whole have most hazy ideas about its real meaning. But then, so have plenty of parsons."



From a chaplain with hospital experience : " Holy Communion is only important to about 20 per cent., and to them it is very central. The figure may be higher—it depends upon the battalion."

From a chaplain and Y.M.C.A. Base Leader : " Holy Communion means a great deal, increasingly, to the best, and the behaviour of non-communicants is often striking. I think we of Scotland have something to observe here."

From a private : " Here again the Holy Communion is not an affair of the ' average ' man. The 20 per cent. of men whom these papers do not deal with have their beliefs, and opinions on it—discuss the various ' cults ' of it, the different teachings of the Churches concerning it ; but to the 80 per cent. it is not real—not ' generally necessary to salvation.' Through the days of training at York, only three went to the Celebrations from our ambulance. At Easter perhaps twenty went, the result of having it ' drilled in ' expressly by the rubric that ' all Churchmen shall communicate at least three times a year, of which *Easter* to be one.' And I think that many feel that one *ought* to make one's Communion at Easter even though they are not in that state of grace which the Church demands of a communicant. It seems a correct thing to do, just like being confirmed—part of one's normal Churchmanship. I know many who make their Communion only at Easter. Personally I think the rubric about Easter Communion should not be there—the earnest Christian *wants* to make his Communion on Easter Day ; he will do so without being ordered by a rubric ; and to the other it is an excuse to come without due preparation.



I feel the same remark applies to the Roman Catholics ; I saw men last Easter going to their ' Easter Duties '—Confession, Communion, Mass, etc.—who dodge church at every possible time and who are not in the least converted. They have never been to Mass since Easter Day. Of course this is a personal matter, and I am merely judging by appearances.

" Then to the majority the Holy Communion is for the ' unco guid '—a prize for saints, not a help for sinners. They do not go because ' they are not good enough '—and are not practically anxious to be better ; why should they be ? The world, the flesh and the devil are very nice if not carried too far. Of course in times of danger many men go to Communion ; but I have dealt with this ; it is the influence of another environment ; in time as men get used to danger, bombardments, etc., they cease to go. Again the padre comes in. If he goes about much among the men and is a sport he will have a large congregation at his Celebration before the attack ; if he is not, he will only have the faithful few. And, of course, men come from different ' churchy ' centres. Londoners go to Holy Communion in crowds ; Yorkshiremen go in twos and threes."

There is not very much in our evidence in answer to the question as to Holy Communion. There seems to be very clear distinction as to this between the Base and the Line. At the Base the number communicating seems to be relatively very small, but the Sacrament seems to appeal very profoundly and to mean a great deal to those who do partake of it. Up the Line there was a much more widespread desire for it, and here too its influence was very deep.

The situation is summed up here by an A.C.G. at one of the great bases : " Combatants are infinitely more responsive, of course, than non-combatants. Even at the Base, in the reinforcement camps where the men are congregated before being drafted up to the Front, a good chaplain can get any number of candidates for Confirmation or men wishing to make their Communion, Confession, etc. Units permanently on the Line of Communication or at the Base would break the heart of almost any priest."

From a Chaplain-General, first at the Base in hospital service, and then at the Front with a Highland battalion : " Communion was very lightly esteemed at the Base. At the Front thirty to thirty-five of my battalion came to the Lord's Table, many of these for the first and last time."

From a sergeant in the R.E. : " The Holy Communion seems entirely misunderstood. No doubt many men feel more comfortable after partaking thereof, as if there were some mystic succour therein, even from physical harm. Men take the Holy Communion before going up to the trenches ' as if they then became secretly armed against all Death's endeavours '—a kind of extreme unction. Is it wise to cultivate this idea rather than that the Holy Communion should be a strength for living not so much as a strength for dying?"

From an officer in a Highland regiment : " There is a striking movement towards Holy Communion by men who are under orders for the Front."

From a chaplain with a London Division : " Signs are not wanting that the Holy Communion appeals deeply to the unconfirmed. I contend that this will

be so more and more as the men learn that Christianity is the religion of a Living Person. In my answers hitherto I may have seemed to pass over the Sacraments, yet not because I overlook them as essentials, but because the first need is to persuade the men that there is a Person to give them power. Persuade them of that and they will see the need and common-sense of the Sacraments to keep them in touch with that Person, just as they see the need of a telephone or letter to keep them in touch with an absent friend."

From a sergeant in the R.A.M.C., ex-Mirfield student :  
" Holy Communion is neglected and misunderstood by almost all the people, and Churchpeople show a distressing lack of any real knowledge of its worth, which means that it is not taught as it should be. . . . I should like to say a word on the value and joy of Confession here. You have not included it, but it will hardly be out of place. One sees deadly sin committed every day, and it makes the need of the sacrament of absolution more necessary every day. No man who has fallen to the depths can feel absolutely certain in his heart that he is forgiven without the comforting assurance that the priestly absolution gives ; nor does anyone who has never tried it know the joy and peace even amongst such sin that comes from a humble attempt to make a true confession in the knowledge of God's forgiveness."

The evidence here seems to indicate that in times of peril and strain, when men were face to face with a great demand for sacrifice, the sacrament of the Lord's Death had a far more powerful appeal than

under other conditions. Does not this suggest that if the life of the Christian Church were more militant and heroic we should have here something which would be more deeply and widely understood ?

(5) *The Kingdom of God.*

One of the questions that we put under the head of "Points of Contact" was what do the men think of the Kingdom of God ? To this there has been practically no answer at all. The men of whom we are thinking do not seem to know anything about it. They do not seem to have any idea that Christianity has a gospel for all humanity, and looks out upon the Reign of God in human society ! Surely this is an astonishing result of all the struggles and conflicts for the religious education of the people of past generations, and of all the preaching and teaching in our Churches and Sunday-schools. Of course the blame must be shared, but it is better for us to think of our own failure than to dwell on that of the men. It is quite clear that there has been a similar failure throughout Europe. But it is surely unendurable that this ignorance should continue. The soil here also, is absolutely "crying out for the seed." The bulk of this report was written during the very agony of the war, out of the heart of the difficulties of the faith of the time. These difficulties remain, and they must be dealt with radically, if we are to win the battle of faith in our time. But the men who were then in the presence of death facing the problem of God and immortality, and suffering, are now discussing what



they are going to do with the lives that have been given back to them, how they shall win a better life for society, and how their children may be saved from enduring such things as they have passed through. Problems of Society and of the nations are in the foreground, and—the men know little or nothing of the Kingdom of God! Here, surely, is a situation of which it is impossible to exaggerate either the danger or the opportunity. If Christianity has any message for civilisation at all, now, if ever in all its history, is the time to proclaim it! Are these men ready to hear?

There is one matter in which it has been found possible to bring up the idea of the Kingdom of God under the existing military regulations which have discouraged all discussion of social questions in the huts in France. That is the question of the World Mission of Christianity.

### *Foreign Missions.*

The evidence under this head is remarkable and deserves exceptional consideration. Interest in foreign missions in view of all that has been said about the mind of the men, is surely the last thing we would have expected. So much was this the case that only when the war was already far advanced did it seem to occur to anybody to try the experiment of stating the case for the World Mission to soldier audiences. But, happily, it occurred to a well-known Base Leader in France, himself a missionary, to have the experiment tried, and the result has been beyond all expectation. A brief statement of the results in that Base and in



home camps, where the idea was followed out is here appended.

From a missionary from India at a Base in France.

“ The following were my chief impressions :—

“(a) The amazing interest taken in the lectures by the men, evidenced not only by the crowded audience but by endless questions at the small lectures and numerous interviews on every possible occasion. I have always felt that missionary problems, if dealt with in the widest connections, were far more interesting than if treated by themselves, but I had hardly anticipated that the average soldier would be so extraordinarily keen.

“(b) Clearly the minds of the men were like ploughed land, opened, stirred and excited, partly by their education, their Church experience, and the social and labour questions they had been accustomed to think about, and above all things by the war, and the tremendous tangle of international questions which it involved, and they were therefore ready to receive and understand serious teaching.

“(c) It was clear that Christianity and the Christianising of the world required to be presented to them, not only from the standpoint of their impact on the individual and his eternal interests, but still more as reacting on the deepest elements of the life of the community and of the whole human race. Men had begun to realise that the unity of the human race was not merely a beautiful abstract theory, but an immense practical fact, involving interests of the highest importance for races, nations and individuals. They were also beginning to see, faintly at least, that

religion is one of the most fundamental elements of our life, and one that reacts mightily on all other aspects of human activity. Nothing interested them more than the perception that missions were big with promise for the uplift of the lower races, in education and economics, and in social and political life as well as ethically. They began to catch a glimpse of the vast fact that Christianity is the one force that we can with any hope expect to act as a lever to uplift all the backward races of the world and to enable them to begin to march along with the progressive peoples.

“(d) It was no part of my programme to look out for possible missionaries, but I met a number of individuals who had been interested in missions in their Churches and homes and who, through the impact of the war, had been roused to a desire to become missionaries.”

The Y.M.C.A. Base leader in this case reports that as the result of the missionary campaign in the area there had been many personal decisions for Christian life and service.

From a missionary from New Guinea at an English camp: “All the leaders recognised the way the missionary appeal got hold of the men, and I think that is now beyond question. It is not a case of isolated experience. It is a uniform experience. Whether it is a fortnight’s campaign such as I helped to organise here, or a week such as we have had at various other camps, we find that the interest tends to increase rather than diminish during that time.

“I have seen a queue of men waiting to get into

some of our meetings. It is usual for men to get their seats half an hour before we are timed to start, and a Y.M.C.A. secretary said the other day that the only time he got his tables broken, apart from concert nights, was when the missionary arrived and the men at the back climbed on them, desirous like Zacchæus of seeing what was on. These are phenomena that are not usually associated with missionary meetings, and they go to show that the story has gripped the imagination of the men. . . .

“When it comes to explaining this interest, I fancy that no single cause will meet the case. I can only give you the opinions I have myself come to in observing what has taken place in talking things over with others. In the first place, of course, one has to realise that owing to camp conditions you are able to get men to lectures that in civil life they would never attend. This, however, does not explain why the numbers and interest should increase when you have a week of lectures on the one great subject. Nor does it explain why they will leave the concert and the cinema in order to be present. There is, no doubt, something in the way the thing is presented. I always urge our leaders to refrain from advertising these meetings as missionary meetings, as by so doing you create a prejudice that you have first to overcome before you can get home with your message. We have to make men feel right at the start that here is something that concerns them and calls for attention. Hence the title for the series of meetings :—‘EVERY BODY’S WORLD WEEK,’ and the titles for the lectures :—‘NEW GUINEA AND ITS CANNIBALS,’ ‘AMONG

SWAMPS AND SAVAGES,' 'THE WILD WEST OF PAPUA,' 'CHINA, a country with a great past and a greater future'; 'INDIA, where vast changes disturb three-quarters of our Empire'; 'JAPAN, a prophecy of what is coming in the East'; 'AFRICA, where the Black is learning the secrets of the White Man's power.' Men see here, even if crudely expressed, something of human interest and so you do not start off with a handicap. At the same time, I took care not to handicap myself with any of the addresses prepared for deputation work in the Churches. You are touching a new crowd, and you can only grip them by getting at their point of view. There is no doubt that that point of view is socialistic in its broad aspects. And the social side of our work certainly holds them. They find the story of the peoples of the world a story full of interest, and their possibilities in the future have set them thinking hard. For good or ill the East and West have met, and new life is pulsating through nine hundred millions of the coloured peoples of the world. They see there is a menace to the White race here, but they also see that among these peoples the forces of God are at work—the religion they had almost ignored, the Christ they had almost forgotten. And there, I think, you are getting to the heart of the interest. I fancy men see in this story a new idea of Christianity. They see it as a sane working policy for every day. They see it, not as some small parochial thing, but as something that is touching and helping to shape the great world movements of the present day. And as they see the great coloured races coming into power they also see that in contrast with so



many of the forces that go from the West there is that in Christianity that is making for peace and international goodwill.

“I believe that it comes as a revelation to many of these men that Christianity is a live thing for live ordinary men. They have come to feel, partly through our timeworn creeds and ceremonies, partly through our special garb and vestments and set modes of worship, and partly through their own short-sightedness, that this religion in a church is not necessary for normal life, and so they have ignored it.

“Then there comes a week during which the story of nations in the making is told and they see religion touching humanity everywhere through school and hospital and industry and civic life, and this holds them, and makes religion a new thing.

“But there is more than this. Men are not playing for safety in these times. They are not nearly so concerned over saving their souls as they are about saving the world. And this story of missions and the story of the world's need comes as a challenge and calls them to a bigger life. The mass of the men in the Army to-day are Socialists of some type or other, and it is an inspiration to be among them and to catch something of this eager spirit that is out to make a better, happier world. And it is right here where they are at their best that the story of missions gets hold of them. It puts before them a great adventure, a service for humanity, and all the best in them rises to the appeal. So you find a Jew coming night after night, and almost persuaded to be a Christian, and confessing that he can never go back again to the



old self-seeking life he used to live. So you find a fine South African pledging himself for missionary service when he gets back to his country, and a degree man who never would have put his name to a pledge card, quietly registering a vow that this is his task if ever he gets out of the Army."

From a South American missionary at an English Base: "The causes of interest among the men in connection with Missionary Campaign:

"(1) Men are unsettled by the War, and are compelled by the very force of circumstances to take a larger view of life. The world point of view comes almost naturally, no forcing is required. The interdependence of nations—one on another—is realised to-day as never before.

"(2) *The men have a hunger for information.* They listen with rapt attention when I have described the geographical situation, and physical features of a country. The commercial possibilities and opportunities of other lands also greatly interest them.

"(3) Manifest indignation at the exploitation of native races by unscrupulous traders. There is evident a keen sense of righteousness for all peoples, also the 'living wage' for all appeals greatly to our men. They are agreeably surprised to learn of the value and presence of a true man of God among native peoples to help them to the realisation and experience of righteousness. The missionary appears in 'new light' to our men.

"(4) The achievements of Christianity in other lands—especially along the lines of civilisation and opening out of a country for trade, and thus for the

general welfare of the world—never fails to gain the appreciation of the men.

“(5) The presentation and call of the heroic elements in Christianity—the challenge of the Cross—never fails to quicken interest.

“Many men seem to have viewed Christianity as a religion accepted by people simply for their own welfare. It seems to have startled many to realise that in it there is call for the highest possible service for the good and welfare of all peoples.

“These men have been called (and they have responded) to suffer, and if needs be, die, for righteousness, and the welfare of small nations. I appeal along these lines to the men to *live* for these things after the war.

“They *understand this* and it appeals!”

The above witness further reports that in one case mission meetings were held in an English Base every night for a fortnight, and that the huts were filled throughout the whole period. He reports also a meeting at which three thousand were present. It had been preceded a few days before by a lecture on the commercial opportunities of South America. He says: “This time I got my missionary appeal in with full force and spoke for over an hour. I had not the slightest difficulty in keeping their attention. This was the greatest audience I have ever had, and to me was a most memorable experience.”

Some of the figures of attendance at one of these missionary campaigns may be found interesting. At one camp in the South of England the attendance is given as about five hundred per night for seven

consecutive nights. This experience was repeated in another camp. In yet another the attendance, beginning on the first night at five hundred, rose on the third and last night to seven hundred. At another Base, in one hut the attendances were six hundred per night for fourteen consecutive nights, and in another hut eight hundred for fourteen consecutive nights.

The Religious Work Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. for France also reports that at one of the great Bases<sup>1</sup> there "for six weeks we had a special missionary campaign consisting of several lectures and addresses. During that period over forty thousand attended these lectures and manifested the closest possible interest in the great need of the world."

He reports also that generally in the Y.M.C.A. work in France lectures on world subjects are invariably attended by crowds of men.

Does not this evidence show that we have been lacking in faith? We have rated the capacities for understanding and sympathy in ordinary men too low. But we must put the case in terms that they can understand.

<sup>1</sup> Not that mentioned above.

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER X

### THE MEN AND THE CHURCHE

We are here dealing with the views of those who are outside the Churches. The evidence shows that the great majority are in no living touch with any Church. How do the men explain their aloofness? We must hear their answer patiently.

A torrent of criticism, with surprising unanimity, has been poured out. The central point is that the Churches are out of touch with reality. The criticism implies faith in what the Church might be.

*Evidence* : I. Lack of the Spirit of Reality.

Church has no intellectual hold on men : contending creeds : Church services seem *unnatural* : unreality of life as well as teaching.

II. Lack of Love.

(1) Want of Fellowship in Christian congregations : class distinctions.

(2) Want of sympathy with workers' efforts for social reform.

(3) Want of Christian unity.

Ecclesiastical divisions source of scandal and mystification.

III. Lack of Life.

Church antiquated and out of touch with modern thought : Churches cramped with tradition : no interest in idea of Church Catholic—Church visible too disillusioning : men miss "grip" in religious life : see no use in Church : lives of professing Christians and ministers : ethics of the Churches : Churches the embodiment of cant : Church too official and "safe" : Church subservient to the State when it ought to be a world-power.

The point of all the criticisms is that the Church has not independent life or a spiritual message, but is deeply tainted with the materialism of the world.

## CHAPTER X

### THE MEN AND THE CHURCHES

WE have set the outlines of the mind and character of the average soldier before our readers. It is only right that we should now, with equal honesty, endeavour to discover how we in the Churches appear to him. How does he explain his aloofness from our communions? What does he think of us all? We must remember, if this chapter surprises us, that its material comes in the last resort not from the men we know, but from the men we do not know. Very many of our readers are no doubt, as clergymen, ministers, and Church workers, in touch with a large and interested body of youth, who are loyal to them and to their fellowships. Although, comparatively, these may be but a fraction of the army, they are, in fact, a very large number indeed. If we were endeavouring to give a complete account they would of course have to come into the picture. But our main aim is more limited. We are here dealing with the much larger class who are without, of whose inner thoughts we rarely hear, and who are apt to lie wholly outside our thoughts. We are seeking the way of reconciliation. For this it seems essential



that we should realise what the reasons are that these men give for their indifference and alienation.

Before we set out on this endeavour it will be of interest if at this point we record the drift of the papers relative to the proportion of those men who are without to those who are within. It is safe to say that these papers convey the overwhelming conviction that the very large preponderance of the men in the armies have no really living touch with any Church. On this, indeed, there is practical unanimity. A large number of the papers go further, and seek to give an explicit answer to the query in the *questionnaire*: "What percentage of the men, would you say, are in vital relationship with any of the Churches?" The results here are not given with any claim that they are scientifically accurate. That is, of course, impossible. But the drift of the question is plain enough to any intelligent man. We all know what is meant by a living relation. Does the man *love* his Church or congregation, does it *mean* anything to him as a fellowship and school of knowledge or virtue? Has he a living sympathy with its aims? It was in this sense that the question was obviously taken up and answered, and the answers clinch the general impression of the whole. As might have been expected, the extremes of these estimates vary. The situation varies greatly in different units, and there are indications that the Kitchener and Territorial forces of the first period of the war were considerably more church-going than the later armies. But about four-fifths of all the numerical estimates made in reply to the above question give twenty per cent. and under. In the Scottish

returns the estimates are somewhat higher than in the English. This is especially the case in some of the Territorial (largely middle class) battalions. The most optimistic estimate comes from a hut worker with the 51st Division. But in general the Scottish estimates do not rank very much higher than the English, and this is especially true of battalions drawn from the great cities. While the net average percentage of the English returns is about eleven and a half, the net Scottish average is twenty.

One of the most careful and thoughtful of all these reports was sent in from one of the great Bases in France. A committee took up the preparation of a report, gathered much evidence and scrutinised it carefully. They came to the general conclusion that, allowing the claim of the Roman Catholic chaplains that *all* their men were vitally connected with their Church, the percentage of the whole in this regard should be set at thirty per cent. vitally related, seventy per cent. not so related.

There were many Scottish troops at this Base, and an independent report as to them sent in by the chairman of the above committee to one of the Scottish Church Enquiries, whose returns have been courteously put at our disposal, gave the similar percentages for these as forty per cent. vitally related and sixty not so related. The Church of Scotland report based on an examination of 200 papers from the whole field of the armies gives the percentage of the vitally related at thirty per cent.

We do not base our view of the whole situation upon these necessarily imperfect inductions, but on the

general cumulative effect of the whole mass of evidence, which certainly bears out the impression that these estimates convey, that three-fourths or four-fifths of the men from England are outside living relationship, and that while the situation in Scotland is somewhat better, it is very grave, and that especially in the great industrial cities it approximates to the English standard in cities of the same type. The general resemblance, indeed, is greater than one would expect, as may be seen by a reference to the evidence in detail.

The best *statistical* estimate of Church membership in Scotland that we can make gives a percentage of almost sixty-three per cent. of the entire adult population as being in one form or other attached to the Church. This percentage is attained on the basis of the official returns issued by the different Scottish Churches. There appears to be a considerable gap between this estimate and that of our correspondents. On the other hand, in Scotland, as elsewhere, the proportion of women members and adherents very considerably exceeds that of men. No statistics are available as to this preponderance, and it will be impossible to estimate the true situation in this critically important matter scientifically, until the Churches distinguish between men and women members in their schedules. The proportion of young men attached to the Church is certainly very much smaller than the above nett percentage. Further, in neither England nor Scotland is it, of course, possible to say how large a percentage of the statistical membership is *vital* membership, likely to stand the strain of complete breach

with home conditions, and the manifold disintegrating influence of war.

The essential subject before us now is, how do these men explain their aloofness from the Churches? That is, of course, a quite different question from the more comprehensive enquiry as to the real causes of that alienation. The great preponderance of the evidence refers to men who, from their adolescence onwards, know practically nothing of the real life of the Churches from within. We cannot, therefore, expect from them any very deep or adequate sympathy with the best life of the Churches. Further, large as is the class from whom these criticisms come, there is a minority relatively small, but absolutely large, who would give a different account of the Churches.

But it is clear that the great mass of our correspondents, who are for the most part deeply Christian in spirit, and who are many of them loyally attached to the Churches, and not a few of them chaplains, believe that there is only too much truth in the criticisms of the men. They see with perfect clearness that at this moment the Churches are in danger of losing the vigorous manhood of the country, and knowing, as they do, the immeasurable value of the Christian Church, they write as men and women profoundly concerned with the present condition of things, and earnestly desiring that it should be understood and met by those at home.

It is probable that some will find this chapter tedious and painful to read. Knowing what the Christian Church has done and what it is doing for the Kingdom of God, and believing that the whole future of humanity



depends upon it, they will be disposed to resent the account here given of it as shallow and prejudiced. We deeply share their loyalty to the Church. Our debt to it is, indeed, boundless. The nobler life of our country and of all Christendom has its deep roots in the Christian Church. It is the mother of us all. To-day the very standards by which the men are criticising the Churches are, as we shall see, derived from its labours and its witness through the centuries. They are its debtors to a far larger extent than they have any idea of. We believe, moreover, that the whole future depends under God on the Church. But we believe that faith and loyalty to the Church demand that we should face the truth, that we should search diligently for it even amid what seem to us prejudiced judgments and apparently scornful words. It is quite futile to seek for reconciliation with anyone unless we are prepared patiently and sympathetically to hear what he has got to say. To close our ears to it is to make the quarrel definite and final, at the very moment when every sacred human interest calls out for unity and reconciliation. And let us never forget that very many of the men who said such critical and bitter things about us in the Churches at the time when this evidence was taken, will come home no more. They have endured unimaginable things for us all, and have died the death of the faithful and the brave.

The questions set under the head of what the men think of the Churches have been as the letting out of waters. There is a torrent of criticism, so copious and so varied that at first it seems almost impos-



sible to set it forth within manageable limits in ordered form. Yet, when we examine it more closely, there are certain broad common elements in it, which we shall now endeavour to set forth. Indeed, we meet here with that surprising unity of testimony which is so striking a feature of the evidence as a whole. If we are to select any one feature of that criticism as central it is this, that these men as a whole believe that the Churches are out of touch with reality and out of touch with ordinary humanity. They think them irrelevant to the real business of their lives, antiquated in their ideas and methods, and wanting in vitality and conviction. Yet behind all this there is an implied faith that there is a very great difference between the Churches as they are and the Churches as they might be. Here is a significant passage from a very carefully prepared report from one of the great Bases in France : "As might be expected, feelings with regard to the Church are very mixed. It is significant that no subject provokes keener interest and more animated discussion than the Church—from which it would appear that the average soldier, whether he is or is not an adherent, is deeply interested in the Church. That the men also have an ideal, and a very high one, of what it should be is apparent from the abundance and the nature of the criticism offered. There is a general recognition of the necessity of such an institution, in the interests of the moral welfare of society, and also a general admission that its extinction would be disastrous to the community. "On all hands there is the emphatic assertion that the Church

is not fulfilling its functions and is losing hold because of its inefficiency."

These sentences may be taken as representing the trend of the great mass of the evidence as a whole.

Let us now see in detail what are the particular grounds which are given in the evidence generally for this conclusion. These are expressed in a great variety of ways, but when we examine into them we come to the formidable conclusion that they resolve themselves in the main into a general want of Reality, a want of Love, and a want of Life. It is not possible wholly to prevent overlapping in this cento of quotations. Truth, Love, and Life are too intimately related in their inmost nature to allow of clear separation in their manifestation. God is Light, Love, and Spirit, and these three are one. Reduced, therefore, to its elements, the charge which these men bring against us all is that we are out of contact with God. This, little as they may realise it, is what underlies their charge of being out of touch with man. The details of the evidence continually cross and interlap. All that can be done here is to classify it roughly under what seem to be the prevailing ideas.

## I

A constantly recurring note is that these men find the Churches lacking in the spirit of Reality. The doctrinal message is unintelligible. They do not know what it is all about. They have a haunting suspicion that the Church itself is not sure about its own creeds and about the Bible, and that there is therefore some-

thing insincere about its testimony. There is as yet not much indication of any reasoned unbelief; but the idea prevails that the Churches are afraid to face the whole truth. It cannot be too clearly realised that this charge, unless it can be met, is fatal. If the Church is anything at all, it is, like its Master, a witness to the Truth. For this end was it born, and to this end did it come into the world, that it should be a witness to the Truth. Therefore, in the end of the day it must stand or fall by its message, by the truth of those faiths by which it lives. If it weakens in those convictions, if it conveys to the masses the impression of insincerity in its proclamation of them, not all that it can do in the way of popularising and modernising its services, not all its social activities, will save it from the inevitable paralysis which will overtake it, soon or late. When conviction and candour as to its primary faiths pass from a Church, its day is over.

Let us now hear the witnesses.

From a hut leader in a great French Base, a distinguished university teacher: "In conclusion I want to say something about your last question about intellectual hindrances. The intellectual difficulty to-day for four persons out of five is to see why they should listen to any sort of padre if they do not want to. The fear of the Lord has vanished imperceptibly like morning mist. No one is interested in theology; all that is desired is the continuance of the Church as a fine social institution which ought to be more democratic than it is, and be the champion of the poor man. The ordinary Englishman is impatient of the divisions

between the Churches, because he cannot believe that any theological differences can really matter. The Church has no intellectual hold upon him ; has it ? ”

The same witness, referring to a letter from an Australian quoted on the following page, writes : “ I venture to think the frame of mind therein indicated, with its entire alienation from the entire Christian view of the world, is much commoner than ‘ church workers ’ of every sect think. This type does not attend religious discussion meetings, but their existence is one of the great reasons why churches are half empty.

“ The only question in the *questionnaire* about which I feel strongly is the last, viz., the question whether intellectual hindrances count for much in producing indifference to the Churches. I reply emphatically, ‘ Yes.’ I do not mean in the old sense that men would listen if they were not bothered about Moses and geology, and Jonah and the whale. That type tends to disappear. What I mean is that there is now no intellectual compulsion to believe the Christian tale, to accept the Christian view of the world and of man’s responsibility. And therefore those who realise how different the world imagined by the ancients is from the world as set forth by modern knowledge, and who are not already dressed in the Christian robes, do not see why they should put on so old-fashioned a suit, one made for another age and climate and now nearly worn out.”

From a report at a great French Base : “ There are evidently a great number alienated from the Church on the ground of intellectual difficulties. . . . The



suggestion that it should be able to do anything to remodel a broken-down civilisation is, indeed, regarded as ludicrous. In such a religion and such a Church critics of this class declare that they find no solace amidst the horror and insanity of war. A letter from an Australian sums up the attitude of such censors in the sardonic pungent *fin-de-siècle* description of the circular issued on the 'Army and Religion' by your Committee as 'the prospectus of a failing company.' "

From a sergeant in the R.A.M.C., experience of fifteen months at the Front, and ten months in seven hospitals with wounds: "As far as our experience in the Army went the Churches represented morality and not Christianity. . . . When I first enlisted I was even glad of the compulsory church parades that seemed to my sanguine mind as though they were a recognition by Authority that 'man shall not live by bread alone.' For months I went to church parades of all denominations—all 'religions,' as they are called. I made friends with chaplains and talked to them. I wanted bread, but they gave me a stone. We were treated as mentally deficient. We liked the hymns for their tunes. They reminded us of home. We were encouraged in hymn singing. The prayers were short and to the point—God must remember us and our Allies. The Gospel, if we were fortunate enough to be given one, was always cut down to a few verses. An address followed on what we should do or not do—containing some moral from the Old Testament, or from Paul—then hymns and more hymns—but of Christ nothing.



“Of the appalling difficulties indeed of applying the teaching of Christ to this complex million-motivated existence—nothing. Of consciousness that there was any problem in the matter of religion at all—nothing.

“I wondered whether we were now paying for our indifference and slackness in times past—that, if we had *really* desired a spiritual lead, or some true hope and comfort, such would now have been forthcoming. Or whether, so great a divorce had come between the Churches and the people that they could no longer speak in the same language. On the other hand, the Communion Service was on many occasions a help and an inspiration to me and to others.”<sup>1</sup>

From a Staff chaplain: “Far more than most of us realise, the stumbling block lies in an un-Christian Church and in un-Christian Christians. Sometimes men’s grounds for opposition to the Church are fairly well defined. Its services are to many unreal and

<sup>1</sup> Beside this unhappy individual experience it is only just to set the testimony of one who has always weighed his words. Speaking in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Sir Douglas Haig, referring to the services of the Presbyterian and other chaplains, said: “Great souled fellows many of them were, who, wherever they went, earned respect both for themselves and the religion which they professed. They brought with them from their liberal education a fine human sympathy with men. In their sermons and lectures they always gave their hearers something solid to think about. They and their fellows of other Christian Churches taught our soldiers the great lesson of comradeship; value of unity, of effort and purpose. Inspired by one aim and object, following a single noble ideal, they brought the strength of religious fervour and conviction to the aid of our nation in arms.”

unintelligible. It seems to educate men not in citizenship but in a hypocrisy which shrouds their native selfishness. . . . They feel that they miss in the Church the two things which might attract them there, viz.: Reality, whatever that may be, and Fellowship.

“ But the offence of the Church is not the only reason why Tommy so often sits loose to Christianity. Here are some of the views of religion, seemingly entertained by many, and these are not always the uneducated and unthinking.

“(1) It is confounded with a system of beliefs to which the outsider's attitude is, either (*a*) all this is bunkum; I do not believe these things. And because he cannot accept some wonderful tale of the Old Testament, he is ready to close his mind to all belief in God and Eternity; or (*b*) it is all too mysterious and subtle for me, too much in the air, too remote from the sort of life I have to lead—(a criticism, one may add, for which there is only too much justification in many of the sermons and addresses which claim to be representative of religion).”

From a private in the R.A.M.C. (Theological student): “ As regards his attitude to Christianity, two things stand in the way of the majority of men with regard to it: (1) the Bible; (2) the Church (using the term quite generally). This is due to lack of sympathy between the Christian and the non-Christian. The former apparently does not take the trouble to explain himself, largely because he is not quite clear in his own mind; the latter does not have much patience with any explanations offered; he is rather suspicious

of a sort of 'cooking,' and most explanations when they come to the really vital points often tail off into pious platitudes or unsubstantiated declarations. He finds the Bible an obstacle largely because he does not understand it. He still thinks the average Christian view of the Bible is along the lines of the old theory of Inspiration. The Old Testament conflicts with common sense; the New Testament ethics will not work in the world to-day. He is against the Church for similar reasons. Professing Christians subscribe to creeds they do not believe or cannot understand. It is sheer folly to sit an hour or two listening to men trying to explain a creed they neither grasp nor live."

From a report from an English Base: "Among hindrances I should class, first, perplexity. The concepts and facts dealt with in Christianity are so vast, that theological systems bewilder them. The extent to which Churches appear to live in and express themselves through the past is a stumbling block to the average man."

A private in the R.A.M.C. sums up the burden of many papers. He says the men distrust the Churches (1) because of their halting methods of teaching, *e.g.*, about the Bible, "Why should we be taught things as kids that we find are not true when we are grown up?" (2) The unintelligibility of the teaching of the Church, the need for modernising of thought and expression.

Most of the evidence on this point comes from English forces. We append a few, the first two from ministers with Scottish regiments.

From an officer in a Scottish regiment: "The

multiplicity of contending creeds and competing Churches, of rival sects, bodies and factions all professing to represent the true Christian faith, bewilder the men. Even the more intelligent of them are baffled by the intellectual complexity in which, at the best, the books, doctrines, and institutions of Christianity have become involved in modern times. The old eschatology of the Church especially has become generally discredited, and with its passing away traditional religion seems to have fallen to pieces, and no credible and coherent body of religious thought has been built up, calculated to grip the modern mind, and presented in such a way as to command something like general acceptance."

But even more frequent than this complaint of want of reality in the teaching is the complaint that the services are unreal, that the preachers have no real contact with human life as the men know it.

An officer in a Guards regiment: "Formality, coldness, lack of spiritual power, these are what are keeping men out of the Churches. Take the *average* Church as it strikes the *average unspiritual* man. The priest takes the service, in an *unnatural* voice, the choir and congregation will say (and rarely pray) the prayers in an *unnatural* tone, the psalms are sung to tunes which often are dull, the choir 'renders the anthem' with doubtful musical abilities and nobody can hear the words or has any idea what it is all about. And then to end up, the vicar preaches a sermon on 'Eat less bread.' "

This note constantly recurs in these papers. They complain that the clergy and the ministry are out of



touch with the men and the times, that they have a sheltered life and a "soft job," that they do not understand the conditions of a working man's life, and that this is one great cause of that atmosphere of unreality in which they live. This particular point, however, will come up frequently again in the two later sections of this chapter, and is referred to here only in a preliminary way.

Finally, it is not only unreality in teaching and preaching and in services that these men complain of, it is unreality of life. Constant reference is made to the inconsistency of the lives of professing Christians with the faiths which they say they believe. We shall again give simply one testimony on this point in this section, for the subject will come up again in the two following sections.

From a hut worker in France, a Congregationalist minister: "A very small proportion of the men with whom one deals seems to have any real connection with the Churches. There are, for example, very small attendances at such services as Communion. This, which is the test of vital relationship with all the Churches at home, is neglected out here by the vast majority, which seems to show that the mass of the men are not keen Churchmen of any denomination. The chief hindrance keeping them out of the Church is, to my mind, the failure to reveal any higher standard of action and conduct on the part of believers. Again and again I have been told of some action which seemed unjust on the part of some Christian employer. There is a widespread suspicion of hypocrisy as belonging to a large number of professing Christians. Rightly



or wrongly, this is what a lot of the men think when they are challenged about their attitude to the Churches, though of course one must take into account the fact that with many it is a good excuse. But the men do not look to the Churches with any great hope that they are going to be the leaders in future progress. I am firm in my conviction that the first thing needed in all the Churches is a new baptism of the spirit of reality. Old phrases must be abandoned and some old thoughts must be revised in the light of the facts of life."

## II

We pass now to the second charge made against the Church by these men. Like the other, it takes many different forms, but at bottom they all come at last to the same thing. Whether the charge be of the lack of fellowship within the Churches, or of their want of human sympathy with the disinherited classes, or of the divisions between different communions, it is an accusation of lack of love.

(1) Let us begin with the charge of the want of fellowship within congregations themselves, as this is the place where any fundamental failure in love must first of all show itself. As we have seen, there has been an extraordinary awakening of the spirit of Fellowship within the Army itself, and this has made the men more critical of the apparent absence of a like fellowship.

Let us hear a few witnesses. Each in this chapter is typical of many.

A common sentiment of these papers is bluntly

formulated by one of the chaplains of a regiment drawn mainly from the mills and mines of Lancashire. "I should say that 10 per cent. are vitally related to the Church, and 10 per cent. semi-attached. The hindrances keeping them out of the Churches may, I think, be summed up in two words, 'starch' and 'autocracy.' In my opinion it has been truly said that there has been more brotherhood in the public-house than in the average Church. The newcomer is looked upon with curiosity, and with suspicion if badly dressed, rather than given a warm welcome into the brotherhood of Christ. This complaint is reiterated by many. It is usually associated with the undue place given to rank and wealth in the Church, and there is frequent mention of the resentment caused by the system of pew rents. Not infrequent reference is also made to the favour shown to those in Churches who treat their workpeople hardly. It is clear that the economic tension is felt within the Churches as well as outside, as a great obstacle to the spirit of brotherhood."

(2) Much more frequent, however, than this complaint of the want of comradeship within the Churches is the constantly repeated complaint that the Churches as a whole have been and are out of sympathy with the endeavour of the working classes of the country to better their social condition and to reach a life more worthy of human beings than that which very many of them enjoy. There can be no doubt that we here get down to one of the greatest and most formidable causes of the alienation of these men from the fellowship of the organised Church. Fuller discussion

of the rights and wrongs of this complaint is reserved for a separate chapter.<sup>1</sup> The evidence here is abundant that the present situation is disastrous, that the masses of the men and the nation in the Army are penetrated by the conviction that the Churches at this moment are neglecting a duty demanded of them by the principles of Christian morality and faith, and that they give this as one of their leading reasons for alienation from their communion.

Let us hear what the men have to say about the matter. And let us begin as before with one or two reports from the Bases.

After giving as one of the great hindrances the asserted indifference of the Church to social reform and adding the qualification, "there is not much sympathy, however, with the view that the Church should enter the political arena, the Church should be the champion of the principles of justice in its all-round bearing," the report of a committee from a great military base in France goes on to say: "It has already been pointed out that one accusation against the Church, vehemently made, is that it takes no inspiring part in social reform. If the Church with all its influence and power cannot or will not take a lead in this it is of no use to the soldier. The comingling of all classes in the ranks has bred a common sense of the social ailments which clamour for remedy, and a profound dissatisfaction with present social conditions. . . . It is quite evident that a critical and dangerous time is ahead of the nation after the war. Nothing less than drastic reforms will satisfy the great

<sup>1</sup> "The Church and Society," Part II, Ch. IV.

multitude who are going home. . . . There is much reason to believe that working men generally have learned from experience to have an instinctive distrust of leaders who have no tincture of religion, and that if the Church could produce men with the capacity for leadership, the consecrated personality, the disinterested sympathetic heart, the sagacious mind, which would invite and justify confidence, it might take such a place in the people's affections and trust, and secure such a power and influence over them as it has never before gained. If stubborn reaction, blind conservatism, arrogant privilege, conspire to make it throw away the unprecedented opportunity which lies before it, it will sink yet further in general esteem and justify the criticisms by which the outsider vindicates his present aloofness. But with wise and generous handling of our difficulties this revolution may be escaped, and the new and deeper thoughts stirred by the new experiences turned into real forces for social betterment."

Report from another great Army Base in France : " One of the main hindrances is a feeling that the Churches do not understand and sympathise with the men's social and industrial disabilities ; that the Churches lack vision and have not the courage to take the lead in these matters ; that the Churches stand for a dull, tame, almost negative and altogether unattractive standard of comfortable and complacent respectability, a respectability quite compatible with flagrant inconsistency and selfishness."

From a chaplain with a Scottish regiment : " The chief criticism of the Churches is that they are futile.



They do nothing and have done nothing ; they are taking no lead in dealing with social problems, in righting wrongs and controlling national life and policy ; they have shown little sympathy with those struggling to produce a better order of things, or at least have given them little practical help. The Church is only regarded by many as a social institution that makes for stability in the national life, but is not in line with reforming tendencies and is out of touch with the restless spirit that is not content with things as they are. The men are not hostile, only indifferent. We have been speaking a language that has lost all meaning for them, and for ourselves too. If we only try to come more into line with them and with their daily experience they will welcome us. We have associated ourselves too exclusively with the middle class and with middle-class conditions and conventions. There must be more co-operation among the Churches, and less suspicion of each other."

From a sergeant in the Military Mounted Police : "The main hindrances are the Church's apathy to the physical needs of the people owing to its neglect in the past to support movements to uplift the struggling masses." The writer thinks that all Churches should be supported by the State. Otherwise the money received from the rich will necessarily make them subservient to the rich. "All these points have been raised in conversations with men in the field. Quite a large number of men have told me that they have broken their adherence to the Church because the Churches ignored the needs of the people, because they neglect the present for the Life beyond Death. . . .



The soldier certainly has a religion. He wants more comforts here below, he wants to bring up his children in far better surroundings, to teach them the value of fellowship and unselfishness, teach them to love their neighbours as they love themselves, and to make this a Kingdom of God, not to teach them to neglect their needs here below and to hope for a Life beyond Death ; that is the soldier's religion. There are but few who have Christianity. They say that Christianity has failed, that it is a theory without a practice."

From a chaplain with a Scottish regiment : "The percentage of men in the Army vitally related to any Christian communion is very small—perhaps 10 per cent. Black sheep among the parsons, professionalism in the same class, superficialism, insincerity, externalism amongst ministers, office-bearers, and members of the Churches are real hindrances greater than we realise. The Church is also charged with cowardice and want of enterprise in dealing with social and economic questions. She is blackballed for making gods of the rich and bowing down before them, and it is said of her that instead of leading the State she allows the State to lead her. Too often she merely underlines the State policy and confirms it, and when she does engage herself in some social reform it is only when the battle is about won already by outsiders. She is always just a little too late. Generally speaking, the men feel that the aims and activities of the Church are too one-sided and unpractical ; that the Church's interpretation of such a phrase as the Kingdom of God is too exclusively spiritual and other-worldly, too little ethical and practical. The prevailing opinion

is that the Church should attempt to do more than establish God's Kingdom here, and should boldly attack existing social inequalities, and indeed the whole of the present social system. But there is practically no hope in the men's hearts that the Church will do this. She seems out of sympathy with them. Her standpoint is so idealistic that it seems to cripple and prevent her from taking definite action. Indeed, it is said that if the Church were to do this now she is so out of favour that for a long time she would be suspect and would not receive the backing to which she might be entitled."

From a chaplain with a Scottish regiment (city): "I fancy a great many feel that the Church is a futile thing, tied up to past traditions, and afraid to do anything bold for fear of offending some of its members.

"I remember a keen social reformer saying that he was disgusted with the Churches because he found that when two or three keen young chaps got together they would often do more to really help great causes of a civic and philanthropic nature than a whole congregation of ordinary Christians.

"Practically all the more thoughtful young men of the wage-earning class feel that there is something utterly perplexing in the fact that the Church counts for so little in connection with social and economic reconstruction. They will never really fully believe in any Church that has not something to say about that matter, and that does not say it fearlessly regardless of consequences.

"The questions raised by the Labour Movement are going to occupy the minds of our young men more and

more. And in that connection they feel, at present, that the Church counts for nothing."

From the Church of Scotland Report: "It must be admitted that in the Army as at home there is a large amount of indifference to and ignorance of the organised Church and what it stands for. From perusal of the returns I would infer that only about 30 per cent. of the men stand in any vital relation to the Church. Probably 40 per cent. are communicants, but of these not more than one half are active in their sympathies. Where individual Churches and ministers have kept in touch with the men at the Front and shown interest in their families at home, the Church has gained appreciation. But on the whole the Church is not one of the things that counts for much in the outlook of the soldier. The returns contain numerous adverse criticisms of the Church, many of them, of course, shallow and unreasonable. The opinion is very prevalent that the Church is 'the special preserve of the well-to-do'; that she is allied with 'respectability'; that she is 'ignorant of the conditions among which men work and sin and does not deal with the practical affairs of man's life—takes no interest in the social and economical questions that are a matter of life and death to the working man.' One chaplain writes, 'I doubt if the men look to the organised Church as a friend who feels a deep responsibility for their welfare.' "

First Report of the United Free Church of Scotland (based on 33 answers): "Some have the idea that the Church has not had the influence it ought to have had on social questions and national and international

affairs ; others declaring that they ' do not see the use of it,' accusing it of selfishness and hypocrisy ; affirming that it has favoured the ' haves ' as against the ' have-nots.' On the whole, however, there is an inclination arising to judge it more charitably. . . . A very large variety of causes is presented as hindering young men from joining the Church. The following are among the criticisms of the Church. It ignores social wrongs and winks at abuses from which its members profit ; it is selfish and accords no welcome to the more indigent classes ; it proclaims half-truths and ignores those that would reform society ; it is altogether too narrow and unsympathetic ; there are too many divisions in it and unseemly denominational rivalries.' "

(3) Only secondary to the complaint of the want of sympathy with the great mass of the people in the privations and injustices of their social condition is the charge brought against the Churches of want of sympathy and unity with one another. A review of the whole evidence in this section brings this massively out as one of the leading reasons for the alleged failure of the Church to hold the men. The mischiefs wrought by the present divisions of the Churches and the scandal caused by their want of charity to one another are again and again emphasised.

Prominent among those evil results is the confusion which, as we have seen, is widespread throughout the Army as to what Christianity really is. It is certainly one of the causes of the " fog " in the minds of men as to the essential nature of the Christian religion. That confusion is the inevitable reflex of a divided testimony.



Further, the divisions of the Church are in large measure responsible for the ignorance of the Churches generally as to the extent to which the active youth of the country is in process of alienation from them. Each communion is naturally and inevitably interested mainly in that part of the population which adheres to it ; and it is easy to forget in the absence of any one general system of supervision, or at least of harmonious and trustful co-operation, how large a part of the whole may be drifting away from any communion.

We begin a brief presentment of the evidence on this matter by reports from the great French Bases, which on the whole represent a greater mass of evidence than any other of our separate documents. One of these reports gives as one of the leading hindrances keeping men from the Churches "the confusing and humiliating spectacle of ecclesiastical divisions," and speaks of "sectarianism, resulting in energy expended in ecclesiastical conflicts and rivalries which should be given to the Church's proper work."

Yet another gives as one of the leading hindrances "the denominationalism and conventionalism of the Church," and asks for a frank recognition that many of the questions about which Christians disagree are not essential, that the Church is more concerned with ethics than with ecclesiasticism.

From a hut worker, a well-known Congregationalist minister: "Many men have lost faith in the Church because of her divisions. It is not so much a revision of our methods in detail which needs to be undertaken as a thorough revolution in our ideas ; such ideas, I mean, as that the division among



Christians is inevitable. A Church which was united though not uniform, which showed some corporate expression of unity, and was concerned more about the Kingdom of God than the prosperity of its own particular section, would, I believe, from my own talks with the men, command their adhesion. Once again, it is not intellectual hindrances which count with many. The supreme thing is the actual living expression of Christian Faith and Life, first of all in a fellowship of believers united among themselves, and then through their efforts in a Christian social order. The greatest spiritual inspiration that the men have received during their experience out here has been the power of comradeship. The thing which they are bound to look for in the future is comradeship both in the Church and in the nation."

From a nurse who has served in Cambridge and France: "I should say that the percentage of men in the Army who are actually hostile to religion is small, but that a large number are indifferent, and that the most amazing ignorance of the fundamental ideas of Christianity prevails. Most of the men have a vague belief in God, and they wish to be buried with religious rites, but they are hopelessly mystified by the conflicting claims of the various Churches. If a man does his duty and is kind to his neighbours, it does not much matter what he believes; one religion is as good as another—that is the point of view I have heard set forth sometimes. Once I heard an animated religious discussion going on in a ward and could not help joining in. One man seemed to be an unbeliever and had said something insulting about Christ. Another (an

American) thought all religions were much the same at the bottom. A third, who posed as a theological expert, had been telling them that a man's sins were all forgiven when he was confirmed, but that every sin he committed afterwards was put down against him as a sort of black mark. A trained nurse, who believed in higher thought and transmigration of souls, had also taken part in the discussion, and had told them that their sufferings were a punishment for sins they had committed either in this life or in a previous existence. There were also three or four men who had not taken much part in the argument, and who were, I should say, good plain fellows with a sort of general belief in Christianity. At last I could not help joining in and telling them what I thought religion really meant. The American asked me what I made of the conflicting claims of Methodists, Baptists, Church of England, and so on, and I tried to explain that the difference between the Christian denominations was largely one of organisation, and that a Methodist might have just the same faith in Christ and personal intercourse with God as a Churchman, though his form of worship might be different. The idea of religion as a living intercourse with God seemed quite a new one to them, and they listened to it attentively.

“On the other hand, I could give a good many instances of keen Christians in the Army. I remember a fine old sergeant-major, a regular, who had been a Churchman for over thirty years and who inquired anxiously why the chaplain had not been to see him. In the same ward there was a Baptist who was always reading his Bible, and who told me that he had been a

local preacher before joining the Army. And there was little A——, a Roman Catholic, who when he lay between life and death tried to sing to himself 'There is a green hill far away,' and with whom I used to say a little prayer when he could not go to sleep. Many of the men, too, used to read the little Gospels which had been given to them, and at Easter, when there was a Celebration in the big ward, about forty came to it, in addition to those who were able to go to the Celebration in the little chapel outside the hospital."

From a chaplain, Guards Division: "Our unhappy divisions are a great drawback. Anything that tends to union will meet the approval of the soldiers. The majority of men who are marked 'Church of England' display some loyalty to it, but they are passive rather than active members. Many think that we are all 'going in the same road.' Many men who have classified themselves as 'Church of England' for want of any definite religion have taken an interest in it during the war. . . . The happy relations which are possible here between padres and their people should surely produce good results after the war. Clergy and laity ought to understand one another as never before. So, too, Churchmen and Nonconformists should have learned much after companionship here. When the Army returns home it will, I believe, give the Church a new chance to become National. Shall we by the grace of God be able to use the chance rightly?"

From an officer in a South of England regiment: "Of course I cannot help speaking as C. of E., but I am familiar with services of other denominations as

well—Congregationalist, Roman Catholic, and Society of Friends. . . . There is no clear idea of what the Christian religion is. It is inextricably mixed up with the beliefs of the different Churches, and confounded with their atmosphere. Men are led to think that Churchmen of every denomination lay the stress on their differences rather than strike for the universally agreed main ideals of Christianity and show that it was these which mattered. . . . The hindrance to the Churches is that they are so often busy amongst themselves as to who shall be greatest instead of aiming at deeper principles. This seems to apply equally to either extreme, and perhaps also to those who pride themselves on being in the middle. . . . I should not like to give any figures of percentage in the Churches. I am afraid that the percentage of those to whom the Churches means anything vital is a very small number.”

Two or three Scottish papers which follow indicate that the divided condition of religion there has a similar effect.

From an officer with a Scottish regiment: “The first thing that the men notice about religion is that Christianity as a practical system has failed after nineteen centuries to make war impossible in Europe. It has failed to check the egoism and modify the rude and elementary ferocity persisting in advanced societies, and animating their policies, aims, and actions. Christianity, that is, has failed to dominate civilisation.

“The men note in connection with this that there is no unity, but the most amazing diversity in Chris-



tendom. The multiplicity of contending creeds and competing Churches, of rival sects, bodies, and factions, all professing to represent the true Christian faith, bewilder the men, and dispose them to give up religion altogether as not to be taken seriously and too hopeless for a plain man to make anything of ; while the more intelligent of them are baffled by the intellectual complexity in which at the best the books, doctrines, and institutions of Christianity have become involved in modern times."

From the Church of Scotland Report : " There is ample evidence that the multiplicity of sects and denominational divisions are a stumbling block to the men."

From the first United Free Church Report : Among the reasons given by the men for not joining the Church there is given the charge that " there are too many divisions in it, and unseemly denominational rivalries."

From a private, R.A.M.C. : " As I have said, our unhappy divisions are a curse. Men fail to see any difference between Church and Chapel, except that the one has a fixed form of service and the other has not. Yet two parts of a parish are opposed—often to the knife. So men say, ' If they cannot agree I will leave them alone.' . . . Then there are doctrinal difficulties. In the Church of England this is appalling. One priest says, ' You must go to Confession and Mass because the Church teaches it.' Another says, ' The Church of England forbids Confession ; it is Romish superstition,' and so on. What is the ' ordinary ' man to do ? The cleverest theologians and most devout



men who have ever lived have spent their whole lives and have written miles of arguments for and against the infallibility of the Pope, Transubstantiation, Confession, the Mass, Apostolic Succession, Authority in the Church, Original Sin, etc., to say nothing of the yet more important doctrines of the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, Ascension of Christ. So the 'ordinary' man says, 'Well, I feel there is probably a God, and that He does somehow influence those on earth and take some kind of interest in them; and I think that there is some kind of future life—at any rate I do not like to think I saw the last of my mother when we put her in the churchyard—but as for the rest, well, I think I'll leave it to those who seem to think they know.' "

A chaplain (C. of E.), after a full discussion of the loyal, the hostile, and the indifferent types, writes:—

"*Relation of the men to the Churches.* Taking this topic, and applying it first to the great bulk of the respectable but ecclesiastically indifferent, I should say that quite the most important point to realise is the extraordinary unanimity with which these men regard the disunion among the Churches."

### III

We come now to the third of the grounds of complaint which these men have against the Churches. Like the others, it has many forms, but fundamentally most of these reduce themselves in the end to one, which we may call the want of Life. We all know how difficult it is to define life, and yet everyone knows it

by its characteristics, energy, adaptability, persistence, initiative, power of growth, and the spirit of adventure and courage.

Now it is in precisely these qualities that they find the Church lacking. It is quite clear that here they speak with a very imperfect knowledge of all the facts. But we shall not do wisely, and we shall never understand them, unless we are prepared to hear what they have to say, and to lay to heart their criticisms. To sum up a good deal of evidence we seem to have left the impression upon them that there is little or no life in the Church at all, that it is an antiquated and decaying institution, standing by dogmas expressed in archaic language, and utterly out of touch with modern thought and living experience. The men are living in a world whose fundamental political ideas are democratic, and which the spirit of the age is making more democratic still, and they find the Churches governed as they believe either by aristocratic forms, or by democratic forms administered in a plutocratic and official spirit ; in an everyday world which is more and more putting a premium on the spirit of youth, daring and adventure, they believe that the Churches are more and more governed by the middle-aged and the elderly ; they think the ministry professionalised and out of touch with the life of men, deferring unduly to wealth, afraid to try experiments and to take risks, lacking in strength and brain, character, hope, joy, sympathy and passion. Therefore the Churches seem to them to be of little account in the great stirring life of the world. They have no hope of help from them in their own hard

struggles for a greater equality of opportunity. But it is not only by any means of the priesthood and the ministry that they complain. They say that they do not see any real difference in the strength and purity of life between the people who go to church and the people who do not. In their own way they say roundly that the "salt has lost its savour," and therefore that its claim to be different from the world is mere self-deceit or hypocrisy.

But let us again take a few typical extracts.

From an officer of the R.A.M.C. (two years' experience with combatant forces): "I wish I could talk over the various points you mention, for I am really interested, but I cannot help feeling that the Church will not stop doing the harm it is doing, far less do any good for the youth of the nation, until it has experienced nothing less than a reformation. I should not think that more than 25 per cent. are vitally related to any of the Christian communions. The Churches seem to most of us young people to be entirely void of any sporting instincts—they are not alive, have no initiative, and are cramped even more than the Army used to be by the red tape of tradition and convention. The Churches are looked upon as a huge waste of public money, their aims narrow and in many points unnatural, their activities childish or old-womanish. It is believed that they do not really help the nation. The Church has been so slow to venture on any social or national work in the past that we cease to look to it for any real help in the future. I do not think it is to be wondered at that so many really serious seekers look for help in their religious life to small communities

which are not looked upon as part of the Church. Things might be different if the Church would only throw off the cloak of tradition and convention and be alive and keep up to the times. . . . The Church which is to help man most is that which is to stick closest to him through all changes which he is bound to experience in his struggle towards that goal where he ceases to be human and is accepted as perfect."

From a chaplain with a Scottish regiment (city): "To begin with, I want to say this—that even among the religious men there is not as yet very much interest in the question of the Church. Very few have as yet seen the vision of the body of Christ. Very few realise what a wonderful and glorious thing the Church was meant to be and may yet be. Even the men who are fond of their own Churches are so because these Churches have brought them help in their personal lives, or because they have friends in them and so have had many happy days in them. They are not yet even interested in the idea of the Church Catholic. I say this about the boys whom I knew well, and who were Scotch, but I also believe it to be true of the majority of Englishmen. I always felt I should have to get my boys on a good way before they would be ready to be interested in the Church as the one divinely great and glorious institution on earth. The record of the Church visible is so very, very disillusioning! . . . What do they really think of the Churches, their aims, their activities, and what they count for in the national life? Mighty little! They do not know much about the Churches, and do them much injustice in their thoughts. But I fancy a great many of them feel that the Church



is a futile thing, tied up to past traditions, and afraid to do anything bold for fear of offending some of its members."

From a chaplain with a Highland regiment: "The men are inclined to think that the Churches have been kindly but too much addicted to form and ritual, ornamental 'fiddle-faddle,' with too little concentration on bold and insistent facing of social questions, moral reefage and wreckage, brotherhood and brotherliness. Humanity, optimism, knowledge of social conditions, capacity and insight, rather than formality and class separateness, are what they will demand from the Church on the day of the returning."

From an officer in a West of England regiment, formerly a minister: "I welcome your circular heartily, more especially as it has to do with the chief thing which induced me to resign my Church, enter an O.T.C. and take up a commission, namely, to share the life of our boys and try to understand them and their minds. You ask what percentage are vitally interested in Christian communions. It is difficult to say—perhaps 5 to 10 per cent. The hindrances keeping them out of the Churches are (1) dull services, long, uninteresting, vague, rambling and often stupid sermons, lazy and incompetent parsons, insincerity of professing churchgoers. The men think, and often very rightly so, that they are as good as, or at least no worse than, those who do go to church. (2) Their own material view of life and society and their ignorance of the reality of their spiritual nature and its needs. First and foremost they need leadership. This is the Alpha and Omega, and all that goes between, of their



needs. It cries to me on every hand. These fine men of ours, for whom I myself have unbounded admiration, consciously or unconsciously cry out for leadership, and I feel so long as we withhold it we are damning the destiny of the Church and the people. They want leadership from the Churches, and leadership from the parsons, the representatives of the Church. They want leadership (a) in religion ; what to believe, what carries validity, what it stands for, how to enjoy its benefits, how to reach heaven ; (b) in ethics, why some things are good and some wrong, what gives eternal imperative-ness to the good, what is expected of them individually, why and how ? In living the ordinary life, how to apply the teaching of religion to the ordinaries of everyday life."

From a chaplain who has served in the ranks : " Out of two battalions in which I have served as a private soldier I should say that not more than 5 per cent. were vitally related to any of the Christian communions. After experience as a chaplain for five months I should be inclined to think that the percentage is usually small. I do not mean by this that more have not come under the influence of the Church. By far the majority have in some way at some time been in touch with the Church as far as attendance goes. In spite of this, however, our proclamation of the Gospel has not gripped or attracted them. Many attended as a result of early training or of a love affair. Some attended because the social life of the Church attracted. Very few attended because religion was a vital part of their individual lives. The painful feature about it all is that so many seem to

have been able to live in touch with the House of God without becoming conscious of His power. . . .

"If religion means anything to man it means everything. Men have sensed this and missed the 'grip' in our religious life. Without being able to express it thus, they have missed the note of passion, the passion which will make us spend all for men. This is our great need. It is useless making plans for when the boys come home unless the Church rediscovers her Lord and Master. The Spirit-filled Church is more necessary than any modifications of organisation."

From a chaplain (seventeen months' experience with London Territorials at home and Yorkshiremen abroad): "Though it is not in the order of your questions, I will begin by repeating the first vivid impression made upon me when I joined up. This was the complete alienation of the great bulk of the men from organised Christianity. I think that at least 70 per cent. of them had never had any use for us at all. Each communion represented in the Army has its own inner core of devout adherents. These are the men most accessible to the chaplains, and much that has been written about the Army and Religion seems to me to apply only to them. . . .

"I have already replied to your questions about the Churches in part. I am sure most of the men have never dreamed of the Church as having much to do with the social and national problems of the future. Nothing of the sort has ever occurred to them. Churches to them are attended by groups of pious people who like praying and singing. When they feel inner needs or are in special trouble they may turn in to a church to

see if there is any help for them, just as they will come to a voluntary service here. They do not mind who conducts it. He may be C. of E., or Presbyterian or Wesleyan. It is all one to them. When they speak about such matters they always say they have no use for denominational distinctions. In a chaplain personality goes for everything, Orders for nothing at all.

“As to changes in the Churches’ methods I speak with great diffidence. I think that generally speaking Nonconformist sermons are too long and C. of E. services too formal. But, of course, the note of reality is far more important than any method. We want a more robust ethical spirit and a clear understanding of what is really sinful. Our ethics have been, or have appeared to be, too negative. Self-denial as often taught seems to many men that we want them to give up the things we do not like.”

From a hut worker (a Presbyterian minister): “The question what do the men think of the Churches is roughly but accurately enough answered by saying that they do not think about the Church at all. Why should they? In their pre-war life the Church never touched them nearly. Their keenest interests were not centred there; it did not give them friendships; it seemed utterly unrelated to their daily work; it never came near stirring enthusiasm or even much interest. The minister with his much higher standard of living, his big house, his children who went to another school for reasons clearly noted, was a professional person like the doctor—a cut above them. To them the Church was easily the dullest institution they knew. Why should they ever think of it now when they were

never conscious of encouragement to think much about it before ? ”

From an officer since fallen in action : “ My experience has been more with recruits than with people who have actually been there, though naturally I have come across a good many of the latter. . . .

“ Recruits do not discuss religion. It is a very individual thing. I think a good many people feel the want of it more or less acutely ; but unless they come across someone exceptional they are not likely to get the want supplied. What help anyone gets is from individuals and not from the institution and its machinery, or from the many clergy who are machine-minders more than anything else. Among officers there is no enthusiasm for padres as a class ; but a good and human one is welcomed with much relief. The Church is mainly spoken of as a commercial concern whereby people are enabled to get an easy livelihood (a ‘ cushy job ’) by *professing* belief in a curious and quite irrelevant set of doctrines.

“ For religion most people, I think, would agree that there is a lot to be said. But the religion of the soldier consists in patience, comradeship, and what is called fatalism. It is quite unpositive unless provoked by someone’s clear need of assistance. It has the charity of fellow-feeling for all kinds of vice except tyranny and hypocrisy ; and that is where it is so much more Christian than the body of all faithful people. But of course it is Christianity *manqué* and coated with all the outward scum which froths up on top of our beastly civilisation. I mean the dreariness of people’s expressed idea about life in general, the ignorance, lack



of imagination and apparent materialism, and the forms of enjoyment which are consequent on these things. But it is not really original sin so much as an excellent and sturdy intolerance of humbug and a refusal of false consolations which is *the* obstacle between all these people and the forms of religion which are offered to them."

From an officer in a Highland regiment (N.E. of Scotland): "One is asked, 'What percentage would you say are vitally related to any of the Christian communions?' If by 'vitally related' is meant that a man looks to the Church for help in facing the problems either of his individual life or of society, that he consciously takes his standard of living from the Christian teaching of the Churches, or that he looks upon himself as in any way bound to participate in the Church's work for the Christian Kingdom of God—then one must frankly admit that the percentage is very small. The Churches, to most men, are simply institutions that happen somehow to exist in society and with which one must unfortunately be connected if one is to be respectable. It is not only intellectual hindrances (such as objections to particular dogmas) that produce this misconception. Far more vitally important are the hindrances arising from the ethics of the Churches. You will never convince the ordinary man of the world that the average parson is in the Church for the sheer love of humanity and good works. It is so difficult to reconcile many highly salaried religious officials with the idea of their being the disinterested servants of their fellow-men. They are frequently men of small mind or of small heart—far



too small for the great message and mission that are entrusted to them. They are not always men of admirable moral character. Some are not innocent of the charge of toadying to the rich and despising the poor, and the members of the average Christian congregation are often little better. Their religion (if such their lip-service can be called) is largely a thing of Sunday, and seems to have little redeeming effect on their everyday life. One thing the common man cannot abide, and that is cant. *And the Churches to him are the embodiment of cant.*

“Whatever methods, therefore, the Churches adopt to recommend and interpret the Christian Gospel to this great generation, they will have to roll up their sleeves and get to work for the pure love of it. They will have to read constantly the tragedy of the suffering servant in Isaiah. They will have to learn anew the lessons of Christ’s Life and Death of service, and they will have to practise them.”

From a Y.M.C.A. hut worker in France: “A very small percentage have any vital relation to the Churches, nor do they look to them for help. They have a vague idea that the Churches ought somehow to have prevented the war. The failure of the Churches to attract men is very obvious, and I have come to the conclusion that the fault lies not so much in methods and organisation as in the failure of Church members to live attractive lives. It is a change of heart that we need, more than a change of method, a real getting back to Christ and His teaching. I have come to realise more than ever before the responsibilities of one who professes to follow Christ, how very careful he must be

that Christ may not be dishonoured through him in the sight of others. . . . The character of Christ was attractive, and men marvelled at His winsomeness ; only in so far as the Church can show lives of attractive power will she be able to win men to her. The great and pressing need is for the Church to revive the spirit of Christ in herself that so she may be able to revive it in others. A new consecration of individual Christians, a closer union with the living Christ, will do more than all reforms to set forward the cause of Christianity."

From a Y.M.C.A. religious work director at a base in France, formerly a chaplain : "Hindrances :—

" On their side—

" 1. Original sin.

" 2. The encouragement of the above.

" On ours—

" 1. Mainly a belief in our lack of ' knight-errantry ' against evil.

" 2. A disbelief in our intellectual honesty.

" 3. A feeling (often unjustified) of caste in the Church.

" 4. An awareness of our inelasticity and inadaptableness.

" 5. A feeling that we are not concerned with the real.

" Their thought of the Church is more or less covered above. I might make this addition—in officers' messes (I have belonged to five) the Church is regarded as *feminine*. The man of the world is not afraid of the Church, as he is afraid (let us say) of Ramsay Macdonald. We ought to change this."

From a chaplain (London Hospital): "In general they feel that the ministry is out of touch with the realities of life. The conditions under which the laity live and their difficulties from a religious point of view, especially those of the laymen, are not realised or appreciated. (This is true to a far greater extent than many admit.)

"The attitude of the Churches is one of *protest* against everything of which they do not approve, and comparatively little is done by Christians to provide good and wholesome substitutes. The Gospel of the Churches, too, is largely imbued with the negative spirit of the Old Testament Commandments rather than with the positive spirit of Christ. It is concerned with small things such as tithing with mint and cummin rather than with great schemes for the realisation of the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven. Men feel there is nothing in the programme of the Churches worthy of their active support. The Churches have lost their vision and spiritual vigour and their power to inspire man to great enterprise for the Kingdom of God."

From a Regular Army chaplain: "Men take a material view of life and morality; generally speaking, the commissioned ranks more so than the men. The Spiritual has never, in our generation, been given a fair chance of appeal. We are earnest about organisation and many other things, but the Church as a whole has lacked concentration on spiritual effect. The 'conference' and 'discussion' cult has not sufficiently helped forward the evangelising of the men with whom we are dealing. When the spiritual does make its

appeal it receives but little response on the part of the many. This is not a special phenomenon of our own time. The Church is too official and grand, *e.g.*, Bishops are too often Personages. In the Church of England we seem to have great difficulty in getting out of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. (Notice our Service Books, Lectionary, Catechism, etc., etc.) I believe that the vast numbers of our members have no idea of the Holy Spirit's office and work. If this is so, can we wonder that material views of life and morality are so prevalent? The Church—and I must say that I believe that this is largely due to what the rank and file of us are permitted to glean from Church papers of the deliberations of Convocation—seems unable to recognise movements of the Spirit—*e.g.*, the Women's Movement. As a Church we are so 'safe.' The aim of our leaders seems to be to prevent the Holy Spirit from going wrong, to safeguard His actions, and to divert His leading. Notice in this connection the restraining influence of the people who make up Convocation."

Prominent among the charges against the Churches in these papers is that not only are they not in sympathy with the social aspirations of the masses, but that they are unwilling in their institutions and government to trust the spirit of democracy, and that where they have accepted those principles they have too often allowed them to be captured by the rich and by the well-to-do middle classes. This charge is, also, a charge of want of life, for spiritual like physical life is characterised by its ability, while maintaining conformity to type, to adapt itself to its environment, by its power to combine



persistence with mobility; to "become all things to all men if by any means it may save some."

From the General of a division (four years' service in France with present armies): "The Church is ceasing to be a profession which attracts intellectual men with any desire to have a wide influence over the men and their time. They have seen how the Church works in a circle of people doing good to each other, and that it is singularly little in touch with the big national life of the country. If the Church is to be a big national institution, the national organisation of a belief in Christ's teaching, it can only do so by representing the nation. The Church as it is does not represent the nation. . . . The advantages of pressing home the responsibility of the laity would, I believe, have a vital effect on the Church, and by the enforced balance of supply and demand would wake everyone up. Perhaps it is only by the laity's feeling the dependence of the Church on them that they will awaken to their responsibility and duty towards the Church."

From a report from one of the great Bases in France: "The men seem to regard the Churches as being under the following obligations: (a) Generally, to justify their existence by revealing their true function in the life of the world, by declaring their distinctive message, and by illustrating in courageous and consistent practice the moral standards of Christianity. (b) To appreciate and support their claims as regards the present industrial system, wages, hours of labour, housing, provision for the disabled, etc. (c) To treat them as rational beings, able and entitled to think for themselves about Christian doctrines. Frankness in



discussion is warmly welcome. (d) To be brotherly in their fellowship and democratic in their government. Intellectual hindrances as such count for little in producing opposition to the Churches. Opposition, where it exists, may be described as anti-ecclesiastical rather than anti-Christian in its character."

From a report from another great Base in France : "It is recognised with practical unanimity that the chief obstacle in the way of the union there ought to be is State establishment and endowment. In the course of a large number of discussions with a large number of men, mostly belonging to the Church of England, scarcely a voice has been raised in support or defence of an established Church, although pains were taken to elicit opinions favourable to it. But State connection, especially State endowment, was objected to still more strongly on the ground that it tended to foster ministerial inefficiency. The various criticisms of the Church along this line may be summed up in the demand that the Church be thoroughly democratised."

There is frequent reference among the papers to the mischief done by "reserved seats" in our churches.

From a Y.M.C.A. worker (four years' experience among troops, mainly English) : "Reserved seats are a *great* cause of ill-feeling among the poor."

From a Y.M.C.A. worker in India, who gives the opinions of a group of men, mainly from the South of England : "We were all agreed that less than 10 per cent. of the men were vitally related to any of the Christian communions. An experienced worker among soldiers put the percentage even lower than this. The

answer to the query 'What kind of help do the men look for from the Church?' was brief and quite unanimous. Every man agreed that as the Church is at present constituted, manacled with golden chains, no help in any way of these needs could be expected from the Church. Its political and financial interests prevent leadership in social reform and account for its former state of compromise, hesitancy and cowardice, while its rank conservatism renders extremely improbable the necessary revitalising of its service."

From a sergeant-major, A.S.C.: "The Church to-day is struggling with the nations to be saved, but humanity is working out its own salvation at the point of the bayonet. Why should it halt to support an institution which has already proved a failure? Why should it be hampered by an institution whose members are divided in thought? . . . To-day we find almost every home robbed of its happy environment; the one asset above all which has bred contentment, however hard the economic struggle, has been torn away. Strong faith in God may console that wounded love, but will never heal it. Forces caused it which the Church, had it been true, powerful and international throughout the civilised world, might have defeated. It is too late now! The octopus which strangled the Church has feasted well. It has fostered hatred, intrigue, and distrust among men; it has broken the hearts of millions who put little faith in the old institutions now, who cry out for a more human expression of God's will in the constitution of civilisation throughout the earth, a basis of right supported by might. The Church may fall and rise again on a

surer foundation, but while the process is being formulated Religion lives on ! ”

Has not this last witness touched the point of the whole matter when he says that the Church which should have stood for the hope of the whole world and shown the nations how to throw off their misery and sin seems itself too much to have succumbed to the materialised life of the world around it? True or false, such is the impression which very many of the papers show to be in the minds of the men. It is this want of independent life expressing itself in vital spiritual hope for the individual, for society, and for the whole world that is behind all their charges of formality, of unworldliness, of subservience to wealth, of inconsistency of conduct with profession, of undue deference to tradition, of want of spiritual message and appeal, of lack of grasp and sympathy with the great popular movements of the age. The charges may be one-sided and over-stressed, but they are formidable accusations none the less. If they are true, they imply that the radical weakness of the Christian Churches to-day is that they are not controlled by the Holy Spirit of God, the Lord and Giver of Life; that the materialism of the all-environing world has penetrated deep and far with paralysing influence into the very tissue and blood of the Church itself. They are therefore a challenge to the Church to demonstrate that they are not true nor just, and it must be a demonstration not of words but of spirit and of deeds.

PART II

RELIGION AND THE ARMY

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER I

### REPENTANCE AND HOPE

I. *The Present Situation.* What is its spiritual meaning, and how is it to be retrieved?

About four-fifths of the young manhood is in no vital relation to the Churches.

Why has this situation been comparatively ignored in the past? "Our unhappy divisions" are one cause. In all movements towards reunion this tragedy must be kept in view.

The vague Theism of the men is not enough.

#### II. *Causes of the Situation.*

We have been content with too facile explanations. But the responsibility rests with the Churches as well as with the men themselves.

The blame does not lie wholly on the Churches of to-day. The Churches failed to meet the situation caused by the Industrial Revolution, and the lost ground has never been retrieved.

The same evil has affected the world and the Churches. This has been a period of unparalleled wealth and power, and the Churches have not escaped the contagion of materialism. A decay of faith has resulted.

In international affairs the materialistic disease has broken out in war. The system has collapsed and the world is being judged. We must use these hours of revelation.

#### III. *The Way of Retrieval.*

The Kingdom of God must be taught in the face of the appeal to Force, and youth won to the service of that Kingdom.

Is this possible? Compare the adventure of faith of the missionary societies in the eighteenth century. We too must take the way of faith.

#### IV. *Grounds of Hope.*

(a) The Resources of God.

(b) The Self-revelation of Man in the war.

(c) The Misunderstanding of Christianity.

We must let the men see what Christianity is before we despair of winning them.



## CHAPTER I

### REPENTANCE AND HOPE

#### (1) *The Present Situation.*

THE evidence is now in substance before the reader. It is greatly to be wished that it were possible to put the entire mass of that evidence in all its Shakespearean richness before the public. There is in it abounding material for epic and tragedy and comedy alike. But the substance has been given, and we have in the closing section of this volume to narrow our enquiry definitely to the spiritual meaning of the situation which it discloses, and the question as to how it may be retrieved. For retrieved it must be if the nation is to escape spiritual disaster, and if we are to reap from the sowing of so vast a treasure of precious human life that spiritual result which alone can make it worth while. We believe that the evidence in our hands is full of deep and startling meaning, not only for the Church, but for all who care for the higher life of our people; and therefore we have felt bound to lay it all in its fulness before the Christian mind of the nation, believing that a new contact with reality is absolutely necessary to any further progress.

That probably four-fifths of the young manhood of our country should have little or no vital connection with any of the Churches, and that behind this detachment there should lie so deep a misunderstanding of the faiths by which Christian men and women live, and the ideals of life which they hold, is, perhaps, the most salient factor of our evidence. Here is an alarming fact, which is, surely, clear proof that something somewhere has gone gravely wrong, and that the hour has come when we must discover the hidden causes of the evil and do what may be done to set things right.

The very first necessity, surely, is that this situation and all that it means should be clearly recognised by British Christianity as a whole. There is reason to believe that in many quarters it is not realised, and that the facts, as they have been recorded in this volume, will come home to many with a shock of surprise, and will even be received with scepticism. With reference to those who feel sceptical, it can only be said that if they will take the trouble to make any real and thorough enquiry for themselves, to check what has been reported here by other Church committees of enquiry like our own, in England and in Scotland, if they will read Sir Charles Booth's well-known volume on the religious statistics of London and compare with it the results of recent censuses of Church's attendance in our great cities, they will find that our results do not materially differ from those indicated by many convergent testimonies. If they are still incredulous we would ask them on what they base their own confidence. What are the solid reasons which make them think otherwise?

It is, however, more than questionable if the

situation has anywhere been adequately realised. If it were fully understood we should surely find it influencing more deeply the statesmanship of the whole Christian Church, and lying as a continual burden on every true Christian heart. There is no great question before the Churches that ought not to be viewed in relation to the vast and formidable fact, that the young manhood of this country in so great a proportion is so utterly unaware of the nature of the Christian revelation and the splendour of the Christian ideal. There is no council of the Christian Church that ought not to be continually pondering over the meaning of this thing, and asking how so disastrous a condition has come about, and what can be done to set it right. It should influence every sermon that is preached and colour every prayer. It is unendurable that so great a tragedy should continue. If there be any gratitude in the souls of men and women who are in the Churches to those who in the field have so freely given their lives for us all, and any faith in the Gospel of Christ, the scandal and tragedy of this their alienation and ignorance of Christian truth must be removed.

Why is it that it has bulked so little comparatively in the mind of the Church? "Our unhappy divisions" are, no doubt, one cause of this. It is so easy for these divided elements to become absorbed in their own interests and to forget the common danger and the common weal: it is so easy for Christian clergy and ministers to become absorbed in their own immediate tasks, and to forget the vast multitude that are as sheep not having a shepherd. Deep and real divergences of faith separate the Christian

communions from one another. They are not the light things that so many of our men believe them to be. The inheritance of the past is at once deadlier and more precious than most of them know. In the meantime, in all movements towards co-operation and reunion, this great persistent tragedy should be kept steadily in view, and the darker evils which may follow it should be remembered, although regard should also be had to the splendid possibilities that may come to the world in this hour of need, if matters can be righted. For assuredly life is not so made by its Author that the vague Theism of the men can endure. The stress of life is too severe, the temptations of the flesh too strong, for it to be other than a transition phase. It is a camp of the night and not a city which hath foundations. And if, by virtue of early training, this dim faith remains in a man's mind till the end, has it vitality enough to win and hold his children and his children's children? Even if it had such vitality, is it good enough for the noble human qualities of the men? Are they not worthy of a greater and yet nearer God, a mightier Saviour and a surer hope of immortality?

If the Christian Churches acquiesce in the continuance of the present condition of things, they will be far more guilty in the sight of God than those who in ignorance deny Him. The first step to better things is clearly to realise the facts, and honestly to face them.

### (2) *Causes of the Situation.*

Having faced and realised the facts, we must probe their causes to the very roots. Can anyone read the evidence and not feel something paradoxical in it,



something intellectually perplexing as well as morally grave? When one thinks of all the spiritual, financial, and political resources of the Churches and their control of schools and pulpits for educational purposes for so many centuries, why should there be this "impenetrable fog" as to what Christianity means, this "nest of misunderstandings," this unconscious following of Christ in the dark and denying Him in the light? We must strive after some radical diagnosis of the situation, if we are to find a radical remedy.

The trouble has been, first, that we have not realised the situation, and that, when we have partially recognised it, we have contented ourselves with explanations that were far too facile. Confronted with the apathy of the great multitudes to the Gospel, we have told ourselves that true faith must always be for the few. Why then did Christ die for all? Why have the overwhelming majority of these men been "baptised into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost"? Again we have traced the alienation to the depravity and weakness of the human heart. But this is only a half-truth. We are confronted to-day with the plain fact that, along with much mortal frailty, these men are in the mass displaying, however unconsciously, great Christian qualities that put most of us to shame.

That there is some truth in the explanation need not be denied. No doubt the masses *had* become, superficially at least, materialised; the young manhood of the nation *had* become pleasure-loving; the evidence is clear enough even to-day that the "fog" on their minds is due often to moral weaknesses and sin. But it is overwhelming in its demonstration that the respon-



sibility and the shame do not rest on the masses alone, but on the Christian Churches as well.

Those responsible for the production of this volume come from practically all the larger Christian communions of England and Scotland. They feel that they are not concerned here with the relative share of responsibility for the situation which must be borne by the different Churches. They can leave that to history. The immediate common necessity is very great and the common past failure very plain. It is certain that the masses of those aloof do blame us all, and that there is so much ground for what they say that none of us are warranted in assuming a superior attitude.

The issue, however, must not be confused at this point. It is not asserted that the blame lies wholly (or even mainly) on the Churches of to-day. The situation which we are considering is not new, although only now are many awakening to it. It has its roots deep in the past. It is not easy to locate the precise time when the masses of the people passed into their present detached and critical temper. Least of all is it asserted that there was any golden age, when things were nearly what we would wish them to be. But it seems fairly certain that much of the mischief was begun during the earlier development of the Industrial Revolution.

"About the middle of the eighteenth century," says Canon Masterman, "a working man would naturally regard himself as a Churchman; seventy years later, he would normally regard the Church as a body with which he had little to do." That the century which has followed has not retrieved this

disastrous period our evidence makes plain. It would rather indicate that the situation has become much graver than it was. It is clear that the great majority of "working men" of to-day regard the Christian Church as "a body with which they have little to do." It is therefore perfectly plain that in spite even of so great a movement as the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century the Churches of that time failed adequately to meet the situation created by the opening of the Industrial Revolution; and it is equally clear that during the nineteenth century, in spite of the Oxford Movement and all other revivals and all that has been done by them, they have failed to retrieve the ground which was then lost. Most of the Churches have claimed the children of the masses by baptism, but they are failing to make that claim good. The lapsing has continued under the existing system and has probably increased. It is surely therefore the part of wisdom to raise the question whether the time has not come for deep and far-reaching changes in that whole existing system under which the life-blood of the Churches is continually being drained away. Something vital and structural has gone wrong somewhere. No reasoning can make it wise or sound to claim children for Christ and the Church by baptism, to educate them in the Christian faith in the schools, and then to lose the great majority of them. What is wrong with them and what is wrong with us, who remain in the sphere of influence of the Churches?

When we raise the question in this radical form, and when we refuse any longer to be put off with the superficial explanations with which we have hitherto

been wont to content ourselves, we must face deeper and more far-reaching questions still. What is wrong with the world? What has been wrong with the age that has come to such vast and terrible confusion in the world-war? We shall never get to the real roots of the problem of the Churches, or reach the secret of how they are to win the lost manhood of the nation, until we realise that the evil which has caused the weakness of the Churches is the evil which in acuter measure has caused the suffering of the world.

The period which is now closing in the thunder and flame of world-war was one to which, for wealth and power, history had never seen a parallel. Compared with its treasures, all the historic and fabled wealth of the ancient East seems like poverty. Beside the navies of the great sea Powers of the present, the armadas of Tyre and Greece and Spain seem like fleets of fishing smacks. Rome at her mightiest could never muster an army approaching that of any one of our Great Powers. At the basis of this vast expansion of wealth and power there lay the scientific conquest of Nature which made possible the great increase of population and the new organisation of modern industry and the modern State, and gave it wealth almost beyond counting, and power of destruction beyond imagination.

But just as Greece, by yielding to her conquerors, took them captive, so Nature, by yielding to man, has seemed to conquer him.

The nineteenth century was beyond all others the century of scientific discovery. It is difficult to exaggerate the gain to all departments of knowledge,

including religious thought, which this has brought in its train ; the new standards of accuracy, and of passion for truth, the new sense of the vastness and wonder of the universe of Nature, the sense, too, of unity, order and law. Such a discovery of Nature means in truth, also a discovery of God. Had all this, therefore, been accompanied by a new uprising of religion strong enough to contain and use it all, it would all have been pure gain for the higher life of man. But the trouble was that throughout the later and critical years of the century there was nothing of the kind, nothing moving the people of Christendom deeply enough to counteract the advance of Naturalism. Fascinated by the wonderful story of Nature as revealed by science, and by the untold wealth which the new knowledge was soon discovered to have put within their reach, men interpreted human life and the human soul increasingly in terms of the material. Men at best are half-grown beings, and in all ages prone to materialism of life, but this perennial temptation was greatly enhanced on the one side by the new understanding of the greatness of the sub-human world, and on the other by the new resources of wealth and power which the new knowledge brought in its train.

Thus the furious race for wealth, while it led to the vast aggregations of capital which were necessary for the exploiting of Nature, led to an ever-deepening materialism of life. Workmen were regarded, not as human beings, but as instruments for the production of wealth, and the inhuman consequences of this have led to deep and fierce social divisions, and a smouldering sense of wrong which gives every sign of one day breaking into



flame. This, too, will come before us as we pursue our enquiry. There is no doubt whatever that the roots of this evil also lie deep in the materialism of the time. Such social bitterness must follow the dominant pursuit of wealth as surely as night follows day. It cannot be said that the prevalent materialism has by any means been confined to the rich. These represent the masses, as well as govern them. In other ages of civilisation the poor have often been the stronghold of religion and idealism when the rich had forsaken them. It was thus, in general, in Biblical times. But the poverty-stricken classes of modern industrialism have to a large extent succumbed to the spirit of the age, in great measure owing to the peculiar conditions in which they have to live.

“For one thing,” says a wise observer, “this gigantic social problem brings home, even to the sleepy traditionalist or recalcitrant official, with demonstrative clearness and clamorous intensity, how large is the dependence of the growth and power of the religious experiences and requirements, amongst average human beings, upon a certain security and stability in the means and circumstances of physical existence, and especially upon some family life and leisure.”<sup>1</sup>

The whole spiritual situation was made worse by another cause. The steady progress of the Industrial Revolution kept transferring masses of men from rural districts to the great cities in such vast numbers that the Churches failed to keep up with the displacement, while owing to their “unhappy divisions” there was no strong and far-seeing central authority to

<sup>1</sup> Baron Von Hugel, “Eternal Life,” p. 314.



look before and after, and maintain and increase their hold upon the population. Much, no doubt, was done, but not enough. Great multitudes continued to lapse from religious membership, and we are reaping the fruit of this failure to-day. The evidence which this volume has presented has made this plain.

Such being the spirit of the world of our day, the question arises: Have the Churches been immune from the general contagion? Are they still proof against it? If they are, then we know what the signs of that immunity will be. Since a life which is rooted in God must be radically different from a life which has its roots in the material world, their life will be very distinct from the life of the world around them. Living membership in them will be a mark of a higher and more spiritual standard and practice in everyday home and business life. There will be in them an intense conviction of the reality of the truths they say they believe and live by. They will be full of the spirit of love to one another and to all men. Men and women will be drawn into them out of the hard materialised world outside their brotherhood, as the wronged and bruised slaves of the brutal pagan world were drawn into the warm fellowship of the Christian Church of the first ages, to find shelter and healing there. They will be full of the spirit of life, of adventure, of experiment and adaptability, "becoming all things to all men, if by any means they may save some." And while such life may and must lead them into endless variety of form, corresponding with the variety of their environment there will be such unity of type as to make it clear to all reasonable

minds what they stand for as against the materialised world.

Can we say that these things have been true of the condition of the Christian Churches during the eventful years of the epoch which is now reaching its close? If they have, how are we to account for the situation disclosed in the evidence before us? If they have not, then the necessary preliminary to any reconciliation, on the part of us all who belong to the organised Church, is deep and heartfelt repentance, and that readiness to reconsider all our ways which repentance implies.

It cannot be denied that something like that which happened in the first Christian centuries has happened again. The contagion of practical materialism has spread to the Church itself, infecting its whole outlook and poisoning the springs of its life.

It is impossible to make the pursuit of wealth and pleasure and comfort the real end of life and at the same time to know the energy and joy of Christian living; impossible to be engrossed for six days of the week in the seeking of temporal things and to recover one's sense of the supremacy of spiritual realities on the seventh. This is what, in great numbers, Christians have been trying to do, with the result that religion has become a dull and formal thing, something which has in it nothing to attract and much to repel the spirit of vigorous youth. The decay of faith which many have noted in our day has been due to something much more radical than any specific doubt as to the culminating truths of the Christian revelation. It has, of course, gravely affected faith in such matters,

but in principle it has been a weakening of belief in the very basis of religion, the Being and Power and Liberty of God, and the reality of any unseen and controlling spiritual world. The real difficulty has been to see where God came in at all. For many the whole spiritual view of life has simply melted away, and such ethical fragments as remain are felt uneasily to be anachronisms, survivals from a vanished world of faith. In the case of others, the same influences have taken from their life its moral energy and joy. "The salt has lost its savour." When the salt loses its savour, the ideal life of the world tends towards decay.

One great trouble with believing men was that the life of the world seemed to work fairly well without any deep acknowledgment of God. It was possible to live a comfortable and successful life without faith. True, disease and death came upon men, the just as well as the unjust. But it was possible to forget them when their shadow was not upon one, and to meet them stoically when they came.

But there were ominous fissures in the great structure of Christendom, signs of some coming earthquake. There were outbreaks of intense political and social bitterness, passing tremors of violence and revolution. There seemed no possibility of getting forward towards a more reasonable and harmonious common life on the principles which men and women generally accepted and practised. In many directions we seemed to be approaching a deadlock, which is a sure sign of an exhausted age. Class and civil and sex war were above the horizon; and on the Continent, as here,

armaments and navies were piling up at an incredible rate.

We have been considering the state of matters within our own nation. But allowing for all national differences, a similar state of things prevailed throughout all the nations of Christendom, though in some the materialistic temper was more accentuated than in others. It was in the relations between these nations that the supreme danger lay. The world had not yet devised any institutions for international life, such as the nations had long been in possession of for the settlement of their internal differences. Nor had the Churches been able to create for Christendom any such sense of the common good, or diffuse any such common ideal of the interests of humanity as patriotism to some extent supplied within the nations. Hence the materialistic disease, which within the nations appeared in the chronic form of social jealousies and strifes, in international relationships took the acute form of war. Even in peace times the whole vast structure of international life more and more came to rest upon the reserves of physical force which each nation stored up in the form of armies and fleets. "Diplomacy," to quote the language of one of the ablest defenders of our country's policy in the last twenty years, was "an outlaw's market."<sup>1</sup> The whole widespread disease found its most malignant expression in the German doctrine that between nations there was no such thing as ultimate Right; that all talk of international morality was hypocritical or

<sup>1</sup> "A Defence of the Policy of Sir Edward Grey," by Professor Gilbert Murray.



stupid, and that the one final appeal was to force. Here the materialistic temper of the whole age found its true expression and exposure. The consequences were obvious, however much they might be disguised under the language of religion or idealism. If, in the greatest affairs of human life, right rested upon might, there could be no such thing as a moral order of the world, or a living God Who governed all things. If it were so, in the end of the day, in all relations of life, social and individual as well as international, the law of might must prevail. Humanity had reached an hour of mortal crisis in this world war. But we shall miss the whole meaning of what has happened if we take the German doctrine of force as the supreme arbiter between states, as an isolated madness. It is in truth the symptom of a world-wide malady, which here appears in its most malignant form.

Now, the whole system has broken down with a crash. The world is being judged. There is no contradiction whatever between this faith and the moral conviction that possesses us that we have been fighting for the whole future of the human race. In every organism the organ in which a disease breaks out is the organ in which it must be fought and conquered. It is the life and health of the whole body that is enlisted against the disease. But the science of healing demands not only the overthrow of the local disease, but recovery of health for the whole body. We must not, indeed, unduly simplify our account of the whole matter. Many other factors were at work, nationality, the personalities of the leaders of nations and of social classes, economic forces and the historic



inheritance of the past. But behind all these, perverting them, and working through them, was the spirit of materialism, carrying up into the life of human society the force of the brute inheritance, putting the love of material wealth and pleasure and power above justice, mercy, and the love of God. It is no doubt true that great changes were coming in Europe in any case. But that they have taken this appalling form is due in the main to the practical materialism of Christendom. The roots of this lie in the loss of faith in the Living God, to which materialism, however weak as a theory, is in practice always the real alternative. In the end of the day there are only two alternative interpretations of life. Either all things have their origin in One Who loves goodness, or in unmoral force. The age which is now closing, obsessed by its victories over Nature, has been swaying towards the latter conclusion. To meet this uprising of evil there must be a mightier uprising of all the powers of the Spirit. There must be a new birth of faith in God. Where should such a new birth of faith begin if not in the Christian Church ?

It is of the very nature of such world convulsions as these in which we are living that they are hours of revelation, times when all who have eyes to see and ears to hear can discern the meaning of the principles on which the nations have been living, and the principles on which God would have them live.

But we can see now what it means to believe that physical force is the last arbiter ; that there is no appeal from force to a greater Nature of things. We can all see that if the brutal assertion of this principle

triumphs, there is coming upon us an age of devastating warfare, a hell on earth into which the nations will be cast who have forgotten God.

We know now, if we had forgotten it before, that sin works death. If we are wise we shall use this revelation. We shall probe to the very roots the malady that has here disclosed itself, tracking it back through history, and out through all its ramifications in the social and industrial life of our day, and in our own lives and the lives of others.

### *The Way of Retrieval.*

But we shall only have begun our real work when we have done this. If the Christian Church is to be true to its mission in this great hour of human destiny, it must now, if ever in all its nineteen centuries, set forth in all its breadth and grandeur the Christian ideal of the Kingdom of God. It must meet at every point the implicit denial of God, which is contained in the appeal to force as the last authority, with the most thorough and uncompromising assertion of the claims of the Divine Justice and Love, in the strength of its faith in the sovereign Freedom and Power of God. So trenchant a denial of God demands as trenchant an affirmation, even though the affirmation convicts ourselves as it convicts all the rest. The truth must not suffer, however much we may suffer from our own consciences in proclaiming it. We have to declare that the will of the God Who has manifested Himself in Christ is not only practicable here and now, but that it is the only practicable solution of the great

problem of human life and destiny. We have in repentance and in faith in God to set ourselves decisively to the realising of His Kingdom.

Having thus set forth the Christian ideal in all its greatness, we have to bend our energies to the complete retrieving of the whole situation, the winning of the youth of the whole nation to the service of the world-wide Kingdom of God.

It may be said that this is to pitch our hopes too high. In spite of all the devoted lives that have been offered to the solution of this problem of reaching the masses of our fellow-countrymen, and in spite of all that has been written and given for that end, the men still remain indifferent or alienated. Can we do anything further? Is it not a waste of energy, energy that might better be spent on intensifying and developing the life of those already vitally connected with the Christian fellowship? The choice that lies before us is one that constantly recurs in human history. For example, is this not precisely the alternative that was before the Churches at the time of the founding of the great missionary societies at the close of the eighteenth century? With England and Scotland in the spiritual condition in which they then were, it seemed to many Christian men in the Anglican and Nonconformist and Presbyterian communities a visionary and unpractical idea to take up anew the task of evangelising the non-Christian lands. It seemed an unpractical waste of energy. On the other hand, there were a resolute few who felt that there was something subtly alien to the genius of Christianity in such an acquiescence. There are few among us now

who would regret the founding of those societies or undo the work they have achieved. Not only have they won great results in all the spheres of their labour, but they have immensely widened the horizon of the Churches themselves, and to-day are inspiring much of their deepest and noblest life.

What was the reason for this renewal of inspiration ?

The fundamental issue, in fact, at the critical moment of decision in the matter was whether the Christian soul of the land would accommodate itself to the circumstances, or accommodate itself to God. It was, further, the question whether or not Jesus Christ was Divine, and therefore Lord and Saviour for all mankind. Moreover it had to be decided whether or not the Christian Church was entitled to expect complete victory for its Lord. In short, the conflict lay between a pessimistic and an optimistic interpretation of history. Are not the issues to-day in this matter substantially the same ? Is not the whole question in the end of the day whether we shall accommodate ourselves to circumstances or to God ? The trouble is that if we accept the former alternative our thought of God will inevitably shrink. Whenever in our souls we accept as inevitable something which we know ought not to be, our whole moral and spiritual energies wane, and something vital in the life of the soul is touched, for we think less of the power of God, His love, and His liberty to help men. Whenever we take the other course we take the way of faith. We venture ourselves on the Christian revelation of God. It is in this way that the truths of our religion, from being matters of faith, become matters of experience,



and the knowledge of the Living God increases, and is passed down the ages to the generations of men.

We have to-day to choose between two conceptions of God. At such a crisis in human history as this, if we do not get down to these elemental realities we shall build the House of the Future upon the sand. If it be true that the materialism of the past generations has led to this vast judgment, and if in greater or less degree we have all been involved in it, Churches and nations alike, the greater is the call to the Churches to begin anew with God, and to interpret their duty in the present crisis in the light, not first of all of circumstances and difficulties, but in the light of God, and what God expects of them and what in His Grace He has given them the right to expect of Him. If there be any meaning in the Christian revelation it is this, that the more we expect of Him the less are we likely to be disappointed. It is surely more in harmony with the Christian revelation to attempt much for and expect much from Him than to attempt and expect little. The basis of all future planning and labour in this regard must be a return of all Christian men to a deeper and simpler faith in God and His Kingdom. If they refuse to lead the world in this return, who shall lead it? This return to God from that practical materialism into which we have fallen is the central message and inner meaning of the whole tremendous judgment. It is the one way to meet the crisis of evil with such an arousal of all the forces of good as shall consummate this great crucifixion of humanity by a spiritual resurrection.



## GROUNDS OF HOPE.

*The Resources of God.*

The primary ground of hopes lies in the inexhaustible God, in His Power and Love and Liberty to help men, manifested in Jesus Christ, and made available for us by His creative and revealing Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

*The Self-revelation of the Men.*

But when we have scrutinised and faced all the darker elements in the situation, it is impossible not to find abounding ground for hope in the revelation of human nature among our men. Placed suddenly in these terrible and abnormal conditions, with so poor an outfit of education and spiritual knowledge as our country has been able to give most of them, coming in the main from economic conditions which were fitted to depress and discourage the best in them and foster the evil, what an imperishable witness they have given to the good that is in man, to the heroic in the commonplace, to the deep founts of courage and loyalty and sacrifice and affection !

And if the manhood of our nation can get so far with such a vague and meagre gospel, to what heights might it not rise if it were fully won for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and for the service of His world-wide Kingdom ?

Think of the great tide of youthful life and vigour that would pass through all the shrunken channels of the life of the Church, if the energy, the initiative,

<sup>1</sup> See closing chapter of this volume.

the comradeship, the gaiety, the devotion of these men who have risen at the call, "For King and Country," were "won for the King of kings and the Country of countries !"

Were the Churches of our country but to realise the grandeur of this prize and the endless possibilities that there are in the winning of it, and set themselves in humility and repentance to ask what in their life has been wrong, and then devote themselves to the task of retrieving their failures in deep and simple faith in God, they would rally to their service and their ministry innumerable men and women who at present hang back for want of a motive and a faith. There are countless men in the armies themselves who would respond to a call for the service of the Kingdom of God, and to any sign of a resolute lead towards a wider outlook and a common line of action.

But what is needed is something more radical than an evangelistic campaign to bring individuals into the effective membership of the Churches. That is well enough in its way, but it is insufficient. Many men in their present temper towards the Churches will simply be alienated still more by such well-meaning efforts. What is wanted is a widening and deepening of the whole outlook and aim of the Churches. If we get this right, all the nobler-hearted of the men will come. They will not be able to keep away.

### *The Misunderstanding of Christianity.*

The third great reason for hope will seem to many a startling paradox. It lies in the amazing ignorance

among the men of what Christianity really means. There is no more startling fact revealed in the evidence than this, and certainly none that should more rouse the Churches to some sense of their own failures and shortcomings. What are they in the land for, except to manifest Christ to the mind and heart of the nation? Why are they in the positions of vantage which they occupy, but for this end? If it is the definition of a saint that he is in the world to make it easier for other men to believe in God, is this not true of the Christian Church in even fuller measure? Yet after so many centuries we find this baffling ignorance. There is something here for us all to consider deeply.

But if we in the Churches must take it home to ourselves as a reproach, is there not in it a ground of hope?

There is a profound difference between ignorance and apostasy. A quarrel which rests upon a misunderstanding is much more easily healed than one which rests upon antagonism. We only reach the core of our whole problem, presented by the contrast between the widespread alienation of the men from the full Christian faith and their display in so noble and moving a form of so many of the great virtues of Christianity, when we grasp the far-reaching effect of this ignorance.

Witness after witness has said that what is needed is "*interpretation*." This, above all, is the message of the "Student in Arms." He does not, it may be, grasp the full extent of the problem, he does not profess to do so or to give a complete solution of it, but there is the intuition of true genius in his finding here the vital point.

Granting that the men must bear their own share of the responsibility for their ignorance of the Christian

revelation, granting also that Christianity is not something which can be learned and remembered like the multiplication table, and that we must practise spiritual truth if we would retain that which we have learned, still it remains true that there is in this misunderstanding very much for which our youth are not responsible. The question may well be asked and pondered,—if we believed that the Christian ideal was negative, if for us there were no vital meaning in the Incarnation, if the Living Christ were for us an unknown reality, should we be Christians? What of our power of resisting even the grosser temptations? Grave as the whole situation undoubtedly is, it would be incomparably graver were it not for the fact that at the heart of it there is this element of far-reaching misunderstanding. It is not claimed here that this is a misunderstanding of the Churches as they are. No doubt there is this also to some extent. But the point is that there is a deep and far-reaching misunderstanding of what the Christian revelation is, and an equally grave misunderstanding of the Christian life, and that this misunderstanding is one which it is the first duty of the Church to do all in its power to remove. It will be time enough to despair, and to limit the Christian instinct which demands that we should adventure out into this great field, to win it for the Kingdom of God, when we have fulfilled the elementary condition of such an enterprise.

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER II

### RESTATEMENT—THE VITALISING OF DOCTRINE

The men have never understood the Christian view of God and the world. The demand for "interpretation."

They must see Christianity as a solution of the great problem of life.

*God and the Problem of Evil.* This is the master problem of the Bible.

*The Bible.* The Churches have failed to show its value. Men are unfamiliar with the idea of progressive revelation, hence Old Testament difficulties.

(a) *The Old Testament Solution* of the problem of evil.

(b) *The Solution of the Gospel.*

*The Problem in the Camps.* The more thoughtful among the men have been awakened to a hunger for knowledge on all subjects. Now is the time for strong Christian teaching on this great problem.

*Belief in God.* The instinctive belief needs converting to the Christian doctrine of God.

*The Personality of Jesus Christ.* His human personality must be made more real.

*Christ's Interpretation of Life.* His teaching about God the Father and human freedom must be made known.

*The Cause of the Decay of Hope.* The Christian ideal is considered unworkable. The weakness of men's idea of Christ and the Father is the cause of this hopelessness.

*The Meaning of the Incarnation.* The Christian life is practicable only if Christ and the Father are one.

*The Incarnation and the Kingdom of God.* Faith in Christ's Divinity is the justification of our hope for the redemption of social and international life, and of the whole human race.

*The Cross* has won a new meaning in France, but has not been related to the problem of God and the war.

The law of vicarious suffering and its value ought to be intelligible to this generation. The Cross shows God, in His Son, entering into this suffering.

*The Spirit of God.* God the Spirit working creatively from within is unknown to the men. But the gift of the Spirit was the culmination to Christians of the apostolic age.



## CHAPTER II

### RESTATEMENT—THE VITALISING OF DOCTRINE

THE whole life of the Church depends on its fundamental faiths about God and the world and the soul, the Person and Work of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Kingdom of God, and the Life to come. Now it is quite clear that this teaching, in spite of all that has been done by the ministry of the Church and by the various systems of religious education followed in the schools, has never been taken home as a whole by the great masses of the manhood of the country. They have taken home parts of it, or these have been revealed to them for the first time by the experiences of the war, but they are broken fragments without unity or cohesion.

This is in large part due to the fact that most of the men have never really understood the things that they have been taught. Where the Christian doctrines have been taught they seem to have been taught as something out of relation to their lives, which has to be believed as a duty rather than as a revelation which makes reason of the riddle of human life. It is a very frequent thing in our evidence to find the need for "interpretation" insisted on, the explanation of what Christ and His salvation really mean. This implies that Christian

truth is at present taught in a foreign tongue which has been learned by rote but never understood. Hence in the great convulsion of the war it has been simply dropped, as something quite without use, and out of all relation to the urgent facts, "just as on a forced march a Bible will be left out of a kit-bag by a man who does not understand and love it," or else retained only as a mascot.

Now, if the present divorce is really to be overcome it is absolutely vital that this should be set right. We are here dealing with something which is fundamental. The Church will have to put its very heart and soul into the work of restating the great faiths by which it lives and from which it draws all its inspiration in terms which the men can understand. The frequent demand for "interpretation" is in truth a demand for the vitalising of theology, for the restatement of Christian doctrines in terms of life. This is a very different thing from abandoning these truths in order to make the Faith plausible and easy to believe, or to take a "greatest common measure" of the working faiths of existing Churches and men as representing essential Christianity. That would be almost as fatal as to lower the standard of Christian conduct in order to make it easier for men to practise. It would be the same kind of apostasy and have the same ruinous consequences. But the great Christian verities are so great that they have many aspects. Every one of them was revealed at the first in order to meet certain practical necessities. To-day every one of them is capable of being brought home to the mind of the simplest, if we can find the true points of contact with him.

How did the great truths of Christianity win their way at the first? Was it not because the life of the Church arrested the attention of men, and then to Jew and Greek and Roman these truths commended themselves as solving the great problem of life? They gave to those who believed them a steadiness and power and moral enthusiasm which enabled them to overcome the world by faith in God and hope for the future and love to men.

The method of "commending the truth to every man's conscience" and "giving a reason for the hope that is in us" which was good enough for the Apostles is good enough, surely, for us to-day. It is able to win the same victories in the troubled inner life of the camps as it did in the immense welter of religions of the Roman Empire. For the problem of life that confronts the thoughtful manhood in our camps to-day has never changed in essence, however varied it may be in form. We shall never meet the real need of the men by simple moral exhortations. Most men know their duty already fairly well. "What they need to know about are old-fashioned things, Grace, Dogma, Conversion." But they need to know about them in the language of to-day. It is perfectly true that the men have, unhappily, little interest in doctrine as they know it. That is just the trouble. But any reasonably competent teacher who will speak to an ordinary soldier audience to-day on "God and the war," and who will throw the meeting open afterwards, will soon discover whether there are not many, as one of our witnesses puts it, who "are aching for a true theology."

No doubt such men are at present a comparatively

small minority, but there are two things to be remembered in this connection : (1) The first is that these men represent the others. They feel keenly and can express more or less articulately what the inarticulate and seemingly indifferent multitude feels dully. What in others appears as indifference appears in them as active questioning. Their minds are groping along the tracks which the others will follow later on. We can, in fact, only really understand the inarticulate multitude through their spokesmen. (2) They are the natural leaders of the multitude, and they are likely to influence them deeply in many ways when the war is over and the times of reconstruction have begun. If such men cannot find an account of the Christian faith which their minds can appropriate and take home, they will certainly find some other account, and their influence will all go to the widening of the gulf. It is, therefore, vital to the whole future that Christian truth should be brought into closer and more vital relation with their present-day experience.

How can this best be done to-day ? That is a very large question on which there will, no doubt, be difference of opinion. All that can be attempted here is suggestion towards the answer. But seeing that this is undoubtedly a matter of the very first importance, indeed one which lies at the foundation of all the rest, an essay of the kind is essential in this place, although it must necessarily be incomplete.

### *God and the Problem of Evil.*

How is man to explain the great whole of things, the world of nature from which he came and the soul

that is in him, with its awful and sacred moral intuitions and values, except on the faith that both alike came from a living God Who is working out a purpose and a Kingdom ? But how, on that primal faith, is man to explain the evil and the tragedy in nature and in the world of man ? These are the conditions of the problem which never change. It is in the travail with the problem of evil that all the higher religions have been born. On the human side they are one and all man's protest and appeal against the sorrows and indignities of time to a greater world from which man seeks life and to which he knows himself akin. All religion is " a prayer for life," and it is by no accident, surely, that the central promise of the New Testament is eternal life and its central fact the Resurrection.

Now it is just this great problem of evil which is the master problem of the whole Bible.

### *The Bible.*

Granting that there are unsounded depths in the mystery, yet none the less there is nothing anywhere that even approaches the breadth and height of the Christian solution. Here, above all, if we can but use the opportunity, lies the road along which we may bring home to the thoughtful men who return from the war the real meaning and interest of the Bible, and the necessity of the knowledge of the truths of Christianity in order to make sense out of the riddles and to bring order out of the confusions of life, and to show the necessity of the Christian Church for the coming of that Kingdom which alone can finally solve the enigmas of evil for the race, and justify the ways of God to men. The



real enemy of the Christian faith that is most to be feared is not the challenge of such pathetically earnest striving with the problem of "God and the war" as was current in all the camps while the war was going on. That was a struggle of immature faith, and, if wisely and sympathetically met, could be turned into victory. The real foe is indifference. To see and feel and struggle with the difficulty is to have begun the spiritual life, and implicitly to have accepted the spiritual view of things. "Thou couldst not seek Me unless thou hadst already found Me." So we may surely speak to these men, and treat them as fellow investigators of a common problem the solution of which will bring to us all a clearer and broader vision of God.

There is no more startling indication of the way in which the Churches have got out of touch with the masses of the men than is to be found in the general ignorance of the Bible. If there was one thing which the Churches ought to have been able to do, it was to show them the interest and the value of the great Book of God. Here, as elsewhere, the blame must be shared. It is quite clear that no Church can enable, far less compel, an unspiritual man to study the great inspired literature of the Scriptures. But it ought at least to have been able, with all the resources of preaching, teaching, and education at its control, to make the men understand the way in which the Bible should be regarded and interpreted. This is especially true of the Old Testament. Judging from the difficulties that are raised in discussions, the men seem to believe that a Christian man is committed by his faith in Christ to the stiffest theory of the verbal inspiration of the Old

Testament, which would imply that the truth of the whole history of redemption which it contains would be shaken if it could be proved that any narrative were mythical, or that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses. There must have been grave want of candour and courage in the teaching of the Church for this to be possible.

There are two disastrous consequences. The first is that, being unfamiliar with the idea of progressive revelation of God, and finding in the Old Testament moral difficulties of which the traditional theory gives no adequate explanation, men either throw aside the whole of Revelation, Old Testament and New alike, or else accept both as on the same level, and, in their thoughts of God, accept a confused idea of Him which is derived from both alike, and yet is neither the one thing nor the other. This is certainly one of the causes of the "fog" in the men's minds of which so much is said, one of the reasons why their thought of God is imperfectly Christianised. The revelation of God in Christ is mixed up in a confused way with early tribal ideas of Him, and thus religion is troubled at the very springs. This is a much graver matter than difficulties about "Jonah's whale" and "Cain's wife" which recur with curious persistency in hut discussions. There never can be any deep and noble revival of religion among us which does not stand for the full Christian idea of God, and until our children are taught a view of the Old Testament which will enable them to understand that there are in it human and transient elements, as well as things which are eternally true, the revelation in Christ cannot have free course among them.

Not until the Churches have agreed thus explicitly to teach in Sunday schools, day schools, and pulpits that revelation is progressive, and that Jesus Christ's revelation of God supersedes all that went before it, can the Old Testament really come to its own. To-day it is comparatively nowhere in evidence in the camps, and it is quite clear that to the immense majority of the men it is a sealed book. They may remember some of its stories, but of its real spirit they know practically nothing.

To a large extent this is also true of the New Testament, but here a great endeavour has been made to supply the want. Very large numbers of New Testaments have been given away in the huts, and, no doubt, immeasurable good has been done in this way. But to speak broadly, it seems, unfortunately, true that the men as a whole are only very superficially acquainted with the immeasurable wealth of practical help for them that lies in the sacred writings. They are as out of touch with this spiritual treasure of the Bible as they are with its doctrinal teaching. How can they be brought to discover it? Why not do it in the way already suggested? Why not show them that from beginning to end the whole thinking of the volume is one prolonged grapple with precisely the question which is harassing them?<sup>1</sup>

### *The Old Testament Solution.*

The central thing in the history of the Hebrew people is that to them had been granted the supreme human

<sup>1</sup> This, of course, applies only to teaching of the Bible to adults. With children a different method must be followed.

treasure, the knowledge of the living and true God. To this faith the evil and the suffering of the world were a perpetual challenge. Realising this, they were always struggling with the problem, and out of the struggle there came the growing revelation of God. Sin and its penalty, the Divine government of the world in righteousness and love, the coming Kingdom of God, and the Messiah, vicarious suffering, the growing faith in personal immortality,—all the great truths in the Old Testament—are revealed to Israel in its grapple with the problem of evil and each marks a new stage in its practical solution. Then at last something amazing happens.

### *The Solution of the Gospel.*

Hitherto man seems to have been grappling by himself with the standing problem of evil, but now, according to the Christian faith, God comes Himself in a new way into the great world of mystery and sin and pain. His Son lives and suffers and dies and rises again, and His Spirit is given, and the Christian Church is founded to bring the Kingdom of God, thus initiated, to its consummation. All is directed towards the abolition of the whole problem of evil, by the final destruction of sin and death.

The whole of the Apostolic thought is thus an endeavour to bring the transcendent new realities, which God has given, to bear upon the ancient enigma, to solve it for the mind and heart, and to abolish it in practice by the conquest of sin and tragedy and death. The same deep underlying motive which is the central theme of the Old Testament is the motive of the New.



*The Problem in the Camps.*

In order that we may realise this close adaptation of New Testament thought to the modern situation, let us turn for a little to these actual present conditions before proceeding with the argument. The task of the teachers of the Church in the coming generation is to bring the whole Christian solution home to the intellectual leaders of the men, and to make it real and modern to them. The heart of the situation is that the bare Theism of the men has in it neither the intellectual strength to solve the questions that they are already asking as to God and the war, nor the moral force to lift them above the temptations of the flesh and inspire them with that hope for themselves and the world which is the great vital necessity of to-day, and to enable them truly to overcome death. It cannot endure the shock and pressure of the fundamental perplexities that have been raised by the war, or meet the moral necessities of the days that will follow upon it. Its awakening in their mind preceded the problem of God and the war. The faith that they had was emotional and intuitive. The dangers around them suddenly awakened men to God. Their past conventional unbelief shrivelled up in a moment, and they felt the reality of God. Then reflection awakened, and at once we had the problem of "God and the war." One of our witnesses says: "I talked with two men. One said, 'After this there will be no more talk about there being no God.' The other said, 'It is no use talking to me about God. No one who has been through the trenches can believe



in Him.' ” Another writes : “ I was sitting at a table one night drinking coffee and listening to the men talking of the fearful experiences out of which they had just come. And one man, evidently respected by the rest, said, ‘ I bet you that there is not a man who was in Delville Wood that night who is an atheist.’ I did not say what I thought, though I confess I should have thought that Delville Wood was enough to make any man an atheist, and probably it and the like of it have darkened the lives of many. The men themselves had described it as ‘ hell,’ which surely is the denial of God, and yet, curiously enough, here was a man challenging a dozen men around him that nobody who had been in Delville Wood could doubt God. I thought that perhaps it was just the sense of gratitude that he had come out of it safely that made him say it. So I said, ‘ Why do you say that ? ’ He replied, ‘ There wasn’t a man who didn’t pray that night.’ ‘ No,’ said another, ‘ we all said our prayers that night.’ ‘ Well ? ’ I said, wanting him to go on. ‘ Well,’ he added, ‘ when a man does pray, it makes all the difference.’ ”

Yet another witness writes : “ One night I was presiding over a discussion in a Y.M.C.A. hut on ‘ God and the War.’ Two Canadians said that they had lost all the faith they ever had ‘ up the line.’ The men listened silently. Then a man got up and said, ‘ All the faith I have came to me up the line.’ There was a general round of applause. They got so keen on the discussion that the time passed unawares. At last the hut leader came and told them that he would have to close the counter, but that if they cared to give up

their supper and stay they might do so. Hardly a man moved, and they kept it up till the final time limit." There you have the whole situation—the emotional, instinctive faith, the doubt awakened by reflection, and the keenness of interest. What is the Church going to do with it? For one thing it has got to take firm hold, to tell the men that theirs is no new perplexity, but the main problem of the Bible. The moment we really seek to grapple with this problem in any kind of thorough way, and to defend the Christian idea of God, we find ourselves inevitably teaching Christian doctrine and referring to the Bible at every turn. It is pitiable that so many should be ignoring Christian doctrine or teaching it only in the letter to dwindling audiences, when earnest men are really hungering for it in terms of life, in simple living terms that they can really take home.

Does that seem to imply a too charitable view of the intelligence of our fellow countrymen? That is not the opinion of those who have been lecturing to them on such themes and conducting discussions in the great bases in France.

Who would have said five years ago that great audiences of working men could have been brought together to listen with intense interest to long lectures on history and on the geography and political constitution of remote minor European States? Yet that was what went on continually during the war.

The young manhood of our country sprang to arms at the call of patriotism, "Your King and Country need you!" The whole world of modern history was, for ninety-nine out of a hundred, a book sealed with seven

seals. What did they know of the *Drang nach Osten*, of the ferment in the Balkans, of the statue of Strasbourg in the Place de la Concorde, heaped for all those forty years with garlands and fresh flowers? But "the wind wrapped them in its wings," the great tides swept them into unknown waters, and there was a hunger among them to know how this tremendous and unexpected thing had come about. They wanted to know what had brought them there. So the historical experts who lectured to them taught them modern history and geography directed towards the answering of this question, and they had their reward. The men who seemed to care for little but sport would listen to them by the hour, and the more serious-minded men besieged them with questions.

Surely the lesson for all who teach religion and theology is plain. They have to preach the great truths of religion with this new orientation, and seeing that the great problem raised is the fundamental one of all, they have a supreme opportunity of teaching the great and vital things of the Christian religion. How is it to be done? Nothing can be attempted here beyond suggestions, which must already be in principle familiar to Christian teachers generally.

It must be said, first of all, that the hardest and deepest thinking that the Churches can put into this matter is essential. The best men will not be put off with any superficial and *ad captandum* treatment. The sooner we realise that the men want thoroughness, reality, and candour, the better will it be for all. Perfunctory teaching by men who have never felt the cutting edge of the problem will be of no avail with the

men who will really be the leaders of the generation after the war. Men who have seen their comrades dissolved by high explosives will want to know what are the reasons for believing in immortality, and what is their present state. Men who have lived in the shambles and putrefaction of the Salient and the trenches at Souchez will want to know how they can remember these things and believe in Almighty Love. They will want to know why prayer in danger gave them such intense relief, and why it seemed so often to be unanswered. They will probably give the Churches a chance again in order to see if they have anything vital and comprehensible to say. If they do not get it from professional teachers of religion, they will take their own road once more. We may be quite sure that most of them will not take their faith on mere authority, or be content with superficialities uttered by men who have never either in body or soul suffered along with them, or with them battled for faith in the wild revel of Sin and Death of these awful years.

There are two points in the mind of the men, as it is disclosed in the evidence, which must form our starting point, the practically universal belief in Almighty God, and the practically universal respect for the character<sup>7</sup> of<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ.

### *God.*

Their belief in God is very real, but yet vague, and perplexed. It is quite clear that the men, as a whole, have no coherent view of God's moral government of the world, or of His Providence as working out a definite purpose in human life and history. They are



as much at a loss as Israel was when the brute power of Assyria and Babylon threatened to overwhelm everything that was holy. We know how the prophets saved the faith of Israel by teaching the moral purpose of God. They made the almightiness and the goodness of God believable, although Jerusalem was a blackened ruin. Our task is far easier, for the cause of humanity has triumphed, but it is just as necessary. We are here at the very centre of the whole spiritual problem of to-day. If it is the practical materialism of our time that has brought the world to its present disaster, then the central necessity is the discovery and manifestation of God. In proportion to the depth of that discovery and the force of that manifestation will be the spiritual victory of the Christian Church in the years that lie before us. All other tasks of the Church are secondary to this, for all the life of the Church, and, in the end of the day, of humanity, depends on its understanding of God.

The first task of the Church to-day is to make believable to thoughtful men the ancient confession "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth." Just as the prophets saved the faith of their people by explaining the Assyrian horror, and rose in doing this to a far greater conception of God as they grappled with the mystery, God and the Assyrian, than did their fathers, so must Christian teaching to-day grapple with this problem of God and the war. We have to give men the full and great teaching of Revelation on the greatest of all themes, and must teach with a new thoroughness and insistency the Christian doctrine of God, of His all-



power and all-knowledge, His ever-presence, His unchangeableness, His creative freedom, His moral government of the world, His purpose in the Kingdom of God, His perfect purity and love. We have to show them, too, the practical bearing of each truth on the Christian ideal. We have, in a word, to follow up that awakening of the sense of God of which our testimonies speak with all our power, endeavouring to turn the dim into a clearer and more reasoned faith. "Whom, therefore, ye worship in ignorance, Him declare I unto you."

*The Personality of Jesus Christ.*

But the endeavour to do this will inevitably lead us on to the second point, the personality of Jesus Christ. It is absolutely vital for any future progress that the human personality and the teaching of our Lord should be made more real to them. "They must not only know that God became man, but they must know what kind of a man He became." It is clear that, though there is almost universal respect for Him, they have no clear knowledge of His human personality. Many of our correspondents refer to this as a source of weakness. They say, in particular, that the great and heroic side of His character is not known. Most of them seem familiar only with the gentler aspects of His character, conceptions derived from school teaching and Sunday-school hymns, often of "a rather weak and washy type." The effect of the labour of the last seventy years of Christian scholarship on the Gospels and the life of our Lord has evidently hardly reached the men, from the side of the Churches at least. Why should we

not bring out the real glory of His personality by setting it forth in the great context in which alone it can be understood, by showing Him as at once the solver and the solution of the problem of evil, the Man who by virtue of His love for men was more awake than any other to the whole tragedy and mystery of human life, who yet showed the most unbounded confidence in God ?

*Christ's Interpretation of Life.*

We have to show them, further, His interpretation of the great enigma of life, the problem which is harassing themselves. He has His solution of that enigma. God is the Father. He is creating a world of spirits, akin to Himself, out of all the travail of human life. He is training them by His Providence, and communicating His own life to them by His Spirit. He will care for His children. They are free therefore to devote themselves to His Kingdom. All converges on the coming of that Kingdom here, and its consummation hereafter. Crucial in this Christian solution is a direct negative to the thought that God is responsible for the war. This is what is really implied in the question, "Why did He ever allow it ?" There is no tolerable solution of the problem that ignores the reality of human freedom. What God is responsible for is the existence of free human personalities living under a moral order. A necessary element of that order is that men are educated by the consequences of their own actions. It also involves that solidarity of the human race which is at the source of all that is greatest and most beautiful in human life as well as of much of its tragedy.

That our Lord taught all these truths can, of course, be clearly shown. They are part of His belief in God, and His interpretation of human life. The Divine education of the race, freedom, sin and penalty, vicarious Suffering, the Kingdom of God, and eternal life, how can we solve the problem of God and the war without these thoughts of Jesus ? The reappearance of the ancient problem to-day is surely our great opportunity of teaching them, and of bringing men to a deeper understanding of the Christ of whose personality and teaching they have as yet so meagre a conception.

Can we really get forward until the men have a juster conception of the man, Jesus ? Could we who believe in Him now have done so, had not His humanity drawn us on ? It is questionable if it is of any real moral use to convince a man logically of the truth of the Incarnation unless in his secret heart he recognises Jesus Christ as embodying his highest moral ideal, for otherwise he acknowledges as Divine one who to him is not the noblest and best. Would not this be a disastrous and retrograde step ? When the moral and religious life are divorced, the harm done to both is immeasurable. This matter of bringing home to men the glory of the human personality and the teaching of our Lord is therefore a primary necessity. But when this has been done they will be ready for the next step.

### *The Cause of the Decay of Hope.*

If the account given in our papers is true, the weakness in the whole religious outlook of these men is that their thought of God is not fully Christianised. The Christian interpretation of life is broken in two at this

point, and what we have is simply severed fragments. On one side is God—"the great and terrible God" dimly believed to be good, Whose Providence directs and governs all things, and Who seems to be held responsible for the war. On the other is the remote Jesus of history, the "gentle Jesus" of the hymns of childhood, who, like His Church, is out of touch with the rough and terrible realities of camp and battlefield, and who has no power to redeem them or the world. Is not the war a standing proof of His weakness as of that of the Churches which represent Him? And since He has no power, what hope elsewhere is there for them, or for the world, of realising a nobler life? The temptation lies near—"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." That these are the thoughts in the minds of many, our evidence discloses clearly enough. The consequences are plain in a great decay of hope, or the concentration of it on other than the highest things. It cannot be realised too clearly, it can hardly be reiterated too often, that this is the crucial symptom of the whole malady. What is wrong with the men as with the Churches is want of spiritual hope. Most of them have no idea that "human nature" can be radically changed. They dismiss the Christian life as for them impracticable. The Kingdom of God is to them, as witness after witness tells us, but a name. Is not the real cause of this simply the imperfect Christianising of the idea of God? Is not this the inner secret also of the want of hope and vitality in the Churches as well, the want of thoroughgoing understanding of, and faith in, the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"? Is "human nature" capable of



radical change? Is the Kingdom of God a practicable reality? Many at home as in the camps will recognise its morality as ideal, but will say that "human nature" being what it is, it is simply an idealist's dream. Nay, is not the nature of the universe against it?

It is here that we get down to the root of the whole trouble. Men are obsessed by the idea of the impracticability of the good. The breaking of that obsession would change everything. How can it be done? We set the problem before the mind of the Christian Church, and ask for its deepest thought. Deep at the heart of this despair lies the thought that the Christian ideal is unworkable in such a world as ours. The world in its essential nature, in its hidden depths, is not Christ's world. Of course they do not reason it out, but this is what is implied in this hopelessness of the men. If they believed it was Christ's world, then they would believe in the reasonableness and practicability of the Christian life.

### *The Meaning of the Incarnation.*

Irresistibly the parallel with early Christian thought arises in one's mind. We know that then a new morality came into the world, far above anything that had hitherto appeared, or had been deemed possible for men. It was inseparably bound up with the personality of Him who taught it. Everyone who knew Him knew that He lived it out without fault and with an amazing freedom and energy of good, and called all men to follow Him therein. They who were drawn to Him were face to face with the same difficulties as men are to-day. The morality was impracticable for



“human nature” and it was not workable in a world like this, in the universe as Jew or Greek conceived the universe to be. Both Jew and Greek were right, and the Apostles knew it. If Zeus, or even if Jehovah, as the Jew conceived him, were the fundamental reality of the universe, then the Sermon on the Mount was impracticable, and the Kingdom of God as Jesus conceived it was a dream. Jesus made it practicable by changing men’s ideas of God, by Himself manifesting the Father. It is the deep but often only half-conscious sense of this that is behind the whole development of the Apostolic thought about Jesus, the exaltation of Him to the “Name that is above every name,” the putting of Him before creation, and the final confession of His divinity. The process continues in the first ages that follow the New Testament. Seen from without, looked at externally as Gibbon looks at it, the whole story may seem only a wearisome wrangle about metaphysical subtleties, but, understood more deeply, it is a splendid enterprise of spiritual idealism and faith. The Christian confession of Jesus as Son of God is not only a confession about Christ. It is an affirmation about the universe. It is an affirmation of faith that it is Christ’s world, of belief in the Christlikeness of Almighty God. On the one side was this seemingly fragile but most lovely memory of Jesus of nazareth, and on the other side was all the vast course of Nature, the glory of history, the prestige of philosophy and learning, backed by the brute power of the empire—a world of blood and steel and gold, all arrayed against the practicability of faith and love and hope, and the possibility of the Kingdom

of God. New Testament writers and the early Church knew with an unerring instinct the only way to maintain the practicability of the life, and that was to hold by their Lord's own witness to Himself and claim the universe as Christ's. Either He was a visionary or "the most real Being in the universe." "Who is He that overcometh the world, but He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" In a word the Christian life was practicable only on the basis that He and the Father were one.

The first believers linked up God and Christ, and all down the Christian centuries the power of the Church's witness has depended upon this union. What the nature of that union is belongs to technical theology. What we are thinking of here is something more immediate and practical, a conviction which is essential to the full energy of the Christian life and which awakens unbounded hope for ourselves and for the world, that in and through Jesus we discern the full nature of God. The lost unity between Jesus and God must be restored. Men have lost the sense of it, in part at least because they have never seen its practical necessity, its vital relation with conduct and life. Being held only theoretically, it has in very many simply fallen half unnoticed out of their minds.

### *The Incarnation and the Kingdom of God.*

The doctrine of the Incarnation is bound up most intimately not only with hope for the individual but with hope for society. The claim that Christ shall have control over all our social and industrial life is simply a translation into practical terms of our faith

in His Divinity. If He were only a Jew of the first century it would be utterly unreasonable to claim that he had the right to rule and the power to save the great world of to-day with its mighty States and its intricate web of commerce and social life. The claim implies His universality, and that again His Divinity. Conversely the Divinity of our Lord constrains us to endless hope for the redemption of all social life, to faith in the possibility of its becoming an incomparably richer and nobler thing than it is to-day. It constrains us to believe in the possibility of a complete transformation of international life, and of the coming of an associated instead of a competing and warring humanity. If Jesus Christ is behind nature and history, if He is "more real" than armaments and fleets, and ancient jealousies and wrongs, to despair of the transformation of the life of the nations is supremely irrational, and to be hopeful the highest wisdom.

Finally, the doctrine of the Incarnation carries with it endless hope for the whole human race. No one who believes that Christ is Divine, and who thinks out all that that means, can fail to realise that He is rightful Lord and Saviour of all mankind. Such a faith must launch men whom it inspires into the most optimistic of all "adventures of the Christian soul," the winning of the whole world for God, in the faith that what ought to be can be, and shall be. We have stated in outline in these paragraphs the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. It is vitally related at every point to the faith that Jesus is the Son of God. In essence the same great question is therefore up to-day in our modern world as was the case in the first three Christian centuries. The plain

task before the Churches is to prove their faith by their works, to translate into ideal and action their faith that Jesus is the Son of God, to carry the manhood of the nation into that crusade, and to show them the vital relation between that ideal and the doctrine that there is nothing in God that is not Christlike, that the Father is perfectly revealed in the Son. Bring that conviction home to the men, and there will at once be a great arousal of slumbering spiritual power.

The relation which exists between faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and therefore His perfect and final revelation, and the arousing of new hope for oneself and for the world is thus close and vital. The same is true of every one of the great truths of Christianity. Men need to believe them in order to live the full life of faith and love and hope, or, which is the same thing, in order to solve the problem of evil. They have all been revealed relative to some vital human need, which is universally felt wherever men are spiritually awake. But for the vitalising of doctrine in our day we must discover in the case of each truth what is the practical spiritual need which it meets, and teach the truth in such a form as will enable men to see its practical bearing. We have to remove a vast misunderstanding that Christianity has little to do with real everyday life, to "interpret" Christian truth. The one way to do this, so far as the great majority is concerned, is to show what the Christian ideal really is, and to teach each of the Christian truths relatively to the moral necessities which that ideal creates. We have so to state them that each one of them comes as a veritable Gospel of deliverance. To-day it is clear that they are



to great multitudes meaningless and have no real lodgment in heart or in mind.

We see this is true of the central Christian truth that "God was in Christ." At present they are trying to solve their own personal problem of temptation and the world's enigma of evil, without taking note of the one fact which makes optimism possible.

### *The Cross.*

What is true of the Person of Christ is true also of His Redeeming work. It is impossible here to deal adequately with this great theme, and yet impossible to pass it by. There are frequent indications in our evidence that the Cross has won a new meaning for the soldier in his own experience of the great problem of evil.

Before the war the Cross seemed to many strangely alien to the busy world of human activities, a relic like ancient armour or crumbling ruins of a darker and a more austere age. But it is impossible to get far away from the Cross in France to-day. On the great ambulance wagons, on long trains speeding westward to the base camps, on ocean steamers ploughing the seas, and on countless graves, the soldier has seen the symbol of the world's redemption. In wayside Calvaries and in shattered towns it has confronted the marching battalions. Most moving of all are the great cemeteries where a cross of wood stands on every grave. The Cross must have a new meaning henceforward to all thoughtful men who have passed through the ordeal of the war. They must see in it something vital linking



up their lives with the Son of Man, and with the great order of the universe.

But there is not much, if any, sign that as yet they relate the Cross to the great problem of God and the war. No doubt that breaking in two of the Christian system of which we have been thinking prevents this. If Jesus be simply a good man who lived long ago, His Cross is simply another among the countless crosses of the cemeteries of France. "Who was He anyway?" said one soldier in bitterness of spirit. "I bet I've suffered more than ever He did." And another witness strikes the only other jarring note by telling us that the men sometimes look with like bitterness on Calvaries shattered by shell fire. What can the Cross do against high explosives in such a world as ours?

Surely there is the deepest need here for real teaching, and still more for something in the life of the teacher that makes it believable to the learners, the teaching that the Cross is a voluntary act of God, Who Himself in His Son freely came among men, enduring the extremity of evil. There can be little difficulty in bringing home to intelligent men the truth that vicarious suffering is a law of the universe. For it is obvious that this whole generation is a vicarious generation. They are bearing the iniquity of many past centuries, and they are laying down their lives for the centuries yet to be. Even if most of them know as little of this vast context as they used to do of the historical context in which their lives are set, yet it is as easy for teachers of religion to bring this great spiritual law home to them as it is for teachers of history to do their part. It is not difficult, too, to show that

a world in which this law prevails is a far richer and nobler world than one in which everyone would get his desert of good or ill ; that such a world would be a world in which there could be no sacrifice for another, no little children, no mother-love, a world of independent adult individuals, each standing up for himself or herself, a moral world without shade or dew, where all life was legal because love could not bear another's burdens, or hazard all things for another's sake. It is easy, too, to show that if it is not unjust that we should profit by the goodness of others, it can hardly be called unfair that we should suffer because of others' sins.

But all this reasoning to suffering and enduring men comes home with a new power when we can tell them of the Incarnation and the Cross and that it is the Christian faith that He Who ordained this great order for the creating and training of souls has entered into human life in His Son, Who has borne the iniquity of all generations and laid down His life for all generations yet to be, disclosing in His Cross at once the depth of human evil and the glory of God's love, so that each reveals the other to its inmost soul. The Cross and the Resurrection are a deeper revelation, in truth, of the ultimate spiritual realities than any last judgment can ever be.

What lies further in the doctrine of the Cross may follow, but the road to it with innumerable men henceforward will be through their experiences and their memories, and their struggles with the problem of sin and death in their most terrible modern manifestation.

*The Spirit of God.*

Finally, surely everything in the spiritual battle of to-day depends on whether God is to be thought of as still creative, or whether the world is simply a great process evolving by an inward necessity. On the latter view man has to moralise himself. On the former he has to allow God to redeem and regenerate him and then to use him to the uttermost for the uplifting of humanity. The men of whom we are thinking believe in a true, if vague, way in an Almighty God of Providence Who controls all life from without. They do not seem to have even imagined a God who works creatively and from within. They do not seem "to have so much as heard of there be a Holy Spirit." Does not the whole future of mankind depend upon whether or no there may be this influx of Divine life from the eternal world into the world of time? Do the two worlds go on parallel to one another, or do they continually intertwine? If men were told of an immeasurable reinforcement of spiritual energy which they could count upon as they count on gravitation, would it not come to them as a Gospel?

That the doctrine of the Holy Spirit meant this to the first generation of Christians is plain to the readers of the New Testament. It is not too much to say that the gift of the Spirit, the thing which seems, so far as our evidence goes, to be quite unknown to the men of whom we are thinking, is to the New Testament men the culminating gift of all. That for which Christ came, for which He died and rose again,

was that men might become partakers now of Life "in the Eternal Spirit."

If we can get these men to believe in the "gift of the Spirit" as a gospel, we have made the way open for the doctrine. Seen in this light, it is part of the Divine solution of the master problem of evil, part of the answer to the great question of God and the war.

We have thus endeavoured to state the principle that the great truths of Christianity must to-day be restated to these men in terms of life, and have illustrated this principle with reference to God the Father Almighty, to Christ's person and work, and to the Holy Spirit, the threefold Name. It is impossible here to develop the illustration further throughout the whole range of revealed truth. The principle, in all cases, is the same, the relating of the doctrine to the practical needs of men.

Surely we have no reason to do anything but welcome the raising of the deepest problem of all, since it lays upon us the necessity of teaching the greatest of all truths.

## ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER III

#### THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Church is criticised as a superfluous survival—but

1. *The need for a Living Church as Interpreter is plain.*

If God was in Christ He cannot be outgrown. The Gospel of Christ needs a steadfast yet living witness to go through all the world and all time. This must be a living society—the Church of Christ.

2. *The Church as a League of the Kingdom.*

The best spiritual intelligence to-day is looking for an associated humanity.

An analogy between a league of propaganda and education to this end, and the Church. Institutional Christianity is a practical necessity.

3. *The Church in History.*

For nineteen centuries the Church has maintained faith in God manifested in Christ. Its influence has been vast. It has shown boundless reserves of strength.

There has never been greater need for the Christian Church than to-day.



## CHAPTER III

### THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE reader of the evidence which precedes will find there, in abundance, criticism of the Churches. Much of it is well-founded, and must be laid to heart if a better state of things is to be attained. Others to-day go further than any of these criticisms and honestly believe that the Church is an antiquated institution, and as such stands in the way of all real progress towards the goal of the human race. All progress, they say, comes through inspired individuals and the propagation of ideas, the spread of education, the development of communication, and the fuller organisation of the modern democratic state. They also say that the Church has become, and will more and more be seen to be, a survival and a superfluity. That the Church played an all-determining part in bridging the Dark Ages and creating the modern world will be admitted by all educated men, but the contrast between its strength then and its impotence to-day, it is urged, is not due simply to its own shortcomings, but to the fact that, like other great institutions, it has outgrown its usefulness. It is quite obvious that with the manhood of the country in its present indifferent or keenly

critical temper towards the Churches such thoughts will find a ready hearing in days to come.

How far are they thoughts which are in touch with reality ?

(1). *The need for a living Church as Interpreter.*

In testing them we must go to the roots of things, and all our thinking here must be determined by the view we take of Jesus Christ. If we believe Him to be simply a supremely good man, who lived a heroic life, and taught a noble but impracticable morality, then it may be freely admitted that the Christian Church may quite possibly be an anachronism to-day. For, judging by universal human analogy, every great human teacher or prophet, no matter how far he may be in advance of his own age and land, inevitably, in time, becomes outgrown through the course of events and the inspiration of that free Spirit which is always leading men onward. The prophet, who was the liberator of his own age, has often, when his teaching was followed in the letter by his disciples, become the gaoler of future ages.

So, if Jesus be but one of the great series of human prophets, may it well be with the community of His followers. But if it be true that in the Christian sense "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself," if we have here a unique revealing and redeeming and creative act of God, then it is quite another matter. If God was in Christ, He cannot be outgrown ; the world cannot outgrow God. The core of the Christian life is its faith that God was really in Jesus. From this fundamental belief there follows the

necessity and the permanence of the Christian Church. For, plainly, the incarnation of God must have been meant for all mankind ; it implies a universal Kingdom of the Father. There must, therefore, be something which will go through all the world, and endure throughout all time, to make the Gospel of Christ real and to interpret it to each changing epoch of culture, and to bring it home by its life and teaching to every son and daughter of men. Such a steadfast and yet living witness can in the nature of the case only be a society of disciples. They must be known as such if they are to do this work, they must be a visible society, a Christian Church. The inner necessity of the case confirms the record of the history from Pentecost onward which tells us that such a society was actually founded. The great majority of Christians therefore believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the Church which is the visible "Body of Christ" on earth. They believe that their faith in God in Christ demands the further faith that the Church can never disappear from the world till the consummation of the victory of the Kingdom of God.

If, then, we look at the primary fact of the Incarnation which lies behind us in history, we see the ideal necessity of a living Church which shall mediate the inexhaustible riches of Christ to every age and to every race of mankind.

## (2). *The Church as League of the Kingdom.*

But let us also approach the question from the practical side. No one who really desires the victory of God's Kingdom in the future, and who will deeply

and thoroughly consider the matter, can fail to see the necessity of a visible society of men and women leagued together for this end.

The best spiritual intelligence in the world to-day is looking for a Kingdom of God, a rule over the nations of justice, mercy, and truth. It is weary of the world that led to this war. The Europe that is emerging maimed and bleeding from the huge mantrap into which it has fallen, will be very different from the Europe of luxury and material wealth and pride which travelled down the primrose path to the edge of that cruel gulf. "There will be very little Nietzscheanism or talk about 'blonde beasts' in the Europe of the near future." Its nobler mind will be calling out for something finer and greater. We trust that it will seek earnestly for an associated, instead of a competing and warring, humanity. The moment has surely come at last for the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

But, the moment that men take this ideal seriously, they will have to begin thinking about the way to it. They will have to consider how the ideal can become a reality. They will have to consider how a league of all the like-minded in all nations may be formed for propaganda and education. Statesmen, alone, cannot solve this problem. Their function, in the main, is not to preach and to teach and inspire, but to deal with the economic, the moral, and the spiritual forces that already exist, which have been generated by others. Let us imagine such a league of propaganda and education formed. If it is to be thorough in its work it will have to remember that human beings are not thinking machines, but creatures of emotion



and imagination as well. The propaganda will moreover have to deal with infancy, childhood, boyhood, and girlhood, as well as manhood, womanhood, and old age. Moreover, it will have to be international and indeed world-wide. It will have to inspire human beings, along the whole range of their mentality, with faith in God, with confident hope for the future of society, and with genuine pity and with love for one another. If it is to be an enduring propaganda it will have to lay itself out to win men and women who at present are unable either to see or believe in such a better world-order as the Kingdom of God. It will have to call men to repentance and hope and dedication. As a matter of course such a propaganda must be organised, there must be some order in it, some to teach, some to care for the poor, some to direct and govern. It would obviously be a wholly admirable thing if it could set apart a frequently recurring day on which people might be free to meet together for the purpose of working out together the problems of the Kingdom. Schools for the children would certainly have to be created. Such a league would need to be a visible society. Part, in fact, of its propagandist power would depend on this. And it would need to have certain marks whereby it could be distinguished, ceremonies of solemn initiation and renewal of its faith.

Everyone who knows anything of human nature knows that these things would be necessary for carrying on that propaganda to victory over the enormous forces against which it would have to fight—the scepticism, the materialism, the conservatism—of human nature.

But with it all something radical would be lacking.



Could men be sure of God—"the great and terrible God," whose Kingdom was seen to be the only true solution? Without faith in Him how could anyone sustain his own life of dedication, and how could he kindle in others the enthusiasm and idealism which so vast a change demanded? "If only we had at the heart of our new League for the brotherhood of the nations, not only a vision of the future, but something real and firm in the past revealing the Divine purpose for each and for all, some assurance that His whole creative power was with us in the present, to enable us to realise that Brotherhood!" So we can imagine our propagandists reasoning, as, realising the greatness of their task, they sought for new life and inspiration.

If we thus consider what the actual condition of human nature is, in which this ideal is to be realised, and think by what means it may be obtained, we come to the practical necessity for something very like the Christian Church.

Need we follow the parallel further? It is unnecessary. The truth is that the whole idea of getting rid of the organised Christian Church as a survival and an obstacle to the coming of the Divine Kingdom springs from impatience with the Church as it is rather than from any real understanding of the conditions of the problem in a world like ours. We honour the great free-lances of the Spirit, the "brave soldiers in the warfare of the liberation of humanity." But the task before the world is too great for any free-lance to achieve, or any number of free-lances that the world is able to produce. It needs as well the whole energies of a great army. It needs Institutional Christianity.

In its Divine intention and idea the Christian Church is precisely that League of the Kingdom of God which the world to-day wants with mortal necessity.

(3). *The Church in History.*

The necessity for the existence of the Christian Church, therefore, as we have seen, is deeply rooted in the very nature of Christianity ; it is essential, also, for the victory of the Kingdom of God. If there were not a Church it would be necessary to invent one. It is at once a logical and a practical necessity for all who believe in the Son of God and the future of the human race.

But surely we can say a great deal more than that of the great Christian Church which is the mother of us all, the spiritual home through nineteen hundred years of so many of the great and wise and just, the saviour of civilisation and the soul of the peoples in the darkest night of time, when the old world fell in ruins ; which amid the incessant changes and developments of modern times has in every Christian land and in ever varied forms maintained, however imperfectly, faith in the God Who has manifested Himself in Christ, and spread the knowledge of that central fact of human history throughout the whole world. Paradoxical as it may seem, the influence of the Christian Church on human history has been so vast and so pervasive that it is easy for superficial thinking to ignore it. We can only measure it by comparing the standards of Christendom with those of pagan antiquity or modern non-Christian lands. We forget that influence as we forget the air around us, but we breathe it none the

less. The very standards of hostile criticism which so many of the men apply to the Churches, they have learned from the Churches themselves. The virtues which they practise, the things which in their souls they believe, though they know it not, they have inherited from the Church of Christ.

"The Church of God," said a great reformer, "is an anvil that has worn out many hammers." The whole course of its history shows its boundless reserve of strength and its unquenchable power of renewal. History shows that in its darkest hours it has always returned to its Founder, and that such returns have brought great influxes of moral and spiritual life.

To-day, if it will so return, it may be drawing near one of the greatest hours in its long history, one of the "days of the Son of Man." The old exclusive national order has broken down, the best minds in all lands are feeling after the ideal of an associated humanity. Within the nations the older social and industrial order is plainly in transition. The best minds there, also, are feeling after a society based, not upon strife and self-interest, but on association and the quest for the common good. Was there ever greater need for a reconciling power, for some common home of the souls of men in which they could meet in their Father's presence ?

"I never saw the meaning of the Christian Church before," said a well-known editor in the first year of the cataclysm, "but I see it now—something that goes deep beneath the differences of the nations ; something that holds them together."

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The men feel that the war represents the condemnation of the existing social system. Are they right?

In international as in industrial life, material self-interest is the driving power.

The men criticise the Church as allied to the governing classes.

*Has the Church a Social Mission?*

Christ has given a social law of love, implying the sacredness of personality, and a social ideal, the Kingdom of God.

In non-Christian lands social effort (anti-slavery, polygamy, etc.) is regarded as part of the Church's work.

*Is the Present Social Order Christian?*

The industrial system is organised for the production of wealth, not personality. A self-regarding conception of industry is imposed on employers and employed alike. A Church that accepts this system must lose the moral leadership of the nation. A Church that stands for the Gospel of the Kingdom may have, like Christ, to face crucifixion.

The present system is defended as inevitable, men being as they are. But the war has shown men to be capable of more than self-interest. The Church must have faith in humanity and in God, and take risks.

*Christianising the Social Order.*

The Christian ideal for society must be made clear.

We do not want an opportunist policy to win the masses, but one based on Christian principle.

Men will never listen to the Churches if they believe them to support injustice.

Our idealism will not deny the realities: the State can only gradually realise ideals. The Church can only accept an imperfect system under protest, while endeavouring to reform it.

*The True Line of Action.*

The first need is not a Church devoted to social reform, but a deepened sense of God—spiritual regeneration. This is the peculiar work of the Church, but it must not leave the other undone.

1. The inner life of the Church. We need a new spirit of fellowship, a democratic government, and unity and co-operation between the Churches.

2. The Church must bear witness (a) by individual members who will put Christian principles to proof in life and business; (b) by its social Gospel. The Church should deal with principles rather than programmes, but means should be devised for the study and free discussion of practical questions.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

It has already been shown in the evidence that there is a deep and widespread dissatisfaction with the existing social system. It is clear that the roots of this lie much deeper than the war, though the war is associated with it in the minds of the men, inasmuch as they feel that the catastrophe represents the breakdown and condemnation of the existing social order. Are they right in this judgment? It has been pointed out in a previous chapter that the causes of the war, as of every great human event, are complex. The ambition of statesmen and races, the dread of invasion, the dominant will of the German military caste, were all true causes of this war. But if these were all, then all we have to do, now that the war has been won, is to get back as speedily as possible to pre-war conditions and go on with the task of civilisation on the old lines, having taken guarantees for the immediate future. But would this take us to the heart of the matter? Are not the men essentially right? Was there not something deeply wrong with the whole order of European civilisation? More than sixty years ago, a



great preacher<sup>1</sup> speaking of the industrialism of the mid-nineteenth century, then in its prime, made this remarkable prophecy, "Brethren, that which is built on selfishness cannot stand. The system of personal interest must be shattered into atoms. Therefore we who have observed the ways of God in the past are waiting in quiet but awful expectation until He shall confound this system as He has confounded those which have gone before. And it may be effected by convulsions more terrible and bloody than the world has yet seen. While men are talking of peace, and of the great progress of civilisation, there is heard in the distance the noise of armies gathering rank on rank; east and west, north and south, are rolling towards us the crashing thunders of universal war."

There is no doubt that the driving power of our social and industrial system to-day is still material self-interest, though we have checked and diverted it somewhat in the sixty years since this prophecy was made. It is surely clear that what corresponds with it in international life is the material self-interest of each nation. Individual selfishness has its counterpart in national selfishness. National selfishness again is behind the war. There is reason, therefore, in what these men in the camps say in criticism of our existing social order. It is, further, clear that they look upon the Churches as, in the main, allied, though in varying degree, with that social and industrial order, and as being subservient to its influence. That this is one of the factors in their indifference

<sup>1</sup> Sermons by F. W. Robertson. Third Series, p. 194. Quoted in Rev. Dr. Coffin's Yale Lectures on Preaching.

to the Churches is abundantly clear. The greatly prevailing idea seems to be that the Churches should take the lead in matters of social reform, though here and there the idea is found that Christianity is a purely other-worldly matter.

It is quite clear that much of the criticism directed upon the Churches in our evidence comes from men who have no real understanding of the truths from which the Church draws its life, and who have an almost exclusive interest in legislative social changes, which they believe will of themselves bring about a happier and better world. "The fear of the Lord," writes a highly competent observer from one of the great base camps, "has vanished imperceptibly like morning mist. No one is interested in theology;<sup>1</sup> all that is desired is the continuance of the Church as a fine social institution which ought to be more democratic than it is, and be the champion of the poor man." Those who believe that the only real solution of the riddle of human life is found in the Christian message, and that no legislative changes can, of themselves, solve the social problem, must necessarily look at the whole situation in a different perspective. They believe that the problem is more complex and demands a richer solution.

But when this has been said, we have not disposed of the criticism which springs from a deep and passionate conviction of social injustice, and from the belief that the Christian Church has been and still is blind to its duty and in secret sympathy with the governing classes.

<sup>1</sup> This, it will be seen, does not tally with the general trend of the evidence. Perhaps the writer means technical theology.

There is the real poison in the situation. Is the charge true ?

*Has the Church a Social Mission ?*

There are many who believe that the whole accusation rests upon a complete misunderstanding of the Church's real mission. They deny that there is any moral obligation of the Church in the matter at all. They hold, therefore, that in all economic questions the Church must observe a complete neutrality, confining itself to "the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints." Its true mission, they believe, is to give the individual "Eternal Life under the eyes of God," and through the individual to reach the family, and through the family to build up the Body of Christ by sacrament and teaching. This alone, they are persuaded, is New Testament teaching and primitive Christianity, and to depart from it is to leave the revealed duty of the Church.

The view, in truth, cannot be carried through because Jesus Christ has given His followers a social ideal, the Kingdom of God, and a social law, the law of love. They have to live not only a life with God, but a life with men, and not only a life with fellow disciples, but a life of love with all men. The whole Christian life is massively cast in the mould of the Fatherhood of God, Since God is the Father of men, men are the likeliest things in the world to God. They are akin to Him. therefore they are sacred. They are of a value far beyond that of any possessions. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?" It is a travesty of these words to narrow

them to the imprudence of neglecting one's own salvation. They mean also, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and destroy a brother's soul?" "What shall a man give in exchange for his brother's soul?" Never was there one to whom his fellow men were so inexpressibly dear as they were to Jesus Christ. This value of the soul, or, in other words, this sacredness of human personality, is part of the leaven of the Kingdom, which, according to Jesus, must spread throughout human society till all be leavened.

Hence everything whatever, custom, tradition, institution and law, that does violence to the sacredness of personality is condemned by essential Christianity. This is the basis of the social mission of the Christian Church. As a matter of fact social effort is universally recognised as an essential part of that mission wherever a Christian Church exists in a non-Christian land. The weight of that Church is always cast against all laws and practices that rest on any denial of the sacredness of personality—slavery, polygamy, and so forth. Nor does this stop when, owing to the success of such a mission, a Christian government takes the place of a non-Christian. In such a case, of course, the Christian Church hands over to the new government the actual details of how slavery and polygamy are to be abolished, but it exerts a steady and vigilant influence upon it, none the less, for it knows that the issue vitally concerns its own most sacred ideal. The centre and the beginning of all Christian propaganda in the mission field is in the individual soul, but it always extends to the social environment, which it is ever seeking to transform.



It knows that that environment steadily militates even against its initial aim, the "conversion of sinners," and still more perhaps against the "edification of saints," because it is tending to depress and destroy the personalities of the great multitude without "for whom Christ died."

*Is the Present Social Order Christian?*

Now, returning to "Christendom," can we say that the social and industrial environment in which the great masses of our armies have been reared is based on the Christian principle of the sacredness of personality? We know, everyone knows, that this is not so. Broadly regarded, our industrial system is organised for the production and development of wealth rather than of men. It is true that the antithesis may be objected to on the ground that wealth is essential for the growth of population, and for the development of men, and the objection would be justified, if society were organised on the principle that wealth was only to be sought and distributed as a means to that higher end. But, again, that is not in accordance with obvious facts. The industrial system under which we are living came into being during the latter part of the eighteenth and earlier part of the nineteenth century. It reached its climax in the theory that the unrestricted pursuit of economic self-interest, that is to say, of possessions, led of itself to the highest attainable welfare of the whole community. This unrestricted pursuit of self-interest was regarded as natural and inevitable, and any interference with it would lead, it was held, to greater harm than



good. It was the duty of a true captain of industry to go into the economic battle and wage it relentlessly in the faith that thereby he was serving the common good. In such a sphere the ordinary Christian values did not apply. The results of this view, which was generally approved by the best thought of the earlier decades of last century, and accepted by the Churches, were soon found to be morally intolerable. But the mind and conscience of the Churches were slow to awaken, and it seems to have been during this disastrous apathy that the cleavage between the masses and the Churches became much wider than before. The Factory Acts were an assertion of the sacredness of human personality. The grandeur of Lord Shaftesbury's life is due to its heroic assertion of this fundamental Christian principle in the heart of the moral anarchy and materialism which accompanied the great industrial revolution.

Modified as it has been since then, the present economic and social system cannot be viewed with satisfaction, except as it may be a necessary stage to something higher. For that one of the effects of that economic system is to materialise both the richer and poorer classes cannot be doubted.

In the first place, inasmuch as that order finds its principle and driving power in self-interest, it must necessarily put a tremendous strain on the higher natures of the men who take part in directing its enterprises. Most Christian men will admit that it is very hard to be a Christian in the natural rivalries of trade, and that it becomes daily harder. Some maintain their standards and keep a heart and conscience unstained. To these we owe a

heartfelt admiration such as we show to a Christian soldier who works out a noble Christian life in the terribly alien environment of war. But many feel themselves compelled to make a clear division between Christianity and business. They accept the system as inevitable; they observe the traditional rules of the game as men of honour; in family life and in friendship they follow Christian ideals, and when they have fought their way to wealth, they use it often for the public good. But in the struggle Christianity does not apply. "Business is business." It is warfare, and in warfare the weakest must go to the wall. It is not surprising that under such a system the general interest in religion is low. How can it be otherwise when for by far the greater part of their lives men are living in a wholly different region and under another rule than that of Christianity? This must always happen whenever any great sphere of life is withdrawn from the sway of higher law.

In the second place, what is true of the rich is true, also, of the poor. The order under which they live, if it does not inevitably weaken and destroy their higher life, puts a heavy premium on the material side of their natures. Their work is mechanical and exhausting, their opportunity for home life, thought and prayer small.

Upon them, as upon those who employ them, our present industrial system imposes almost of necessity the self-regarding conception of their daily labour. In the Christian ideal the primary conception of industry is that of service to the community—service for which, as is both just and necessary, a return should be made

in the form of wages adequate to the rightful needs and obligations of the workers' own lives. As things are at present, however, the precarious position of many of the workers, whom protracted illness or unemployment may at any moment bring face to face with ruin, or a long period of embarrassing debt, inevitably throws an exaggerated emphasis upon the wage-element in the contract. It is only natural that, as a result, this secondary element has come to assume the primary place in their conception of industry. Thus in the occupation which claims by far the largest part of their conscious activity we leave them to be dominated by the ideal of self-interest rather than, as a Christian system of life would allow, by the nobler ideal of unselfish service.

If these things are true (and can anyone deny that they are true of our present social and industrial life?) there is clearly here a departure from the whole Christian view of man, and the society that accepts it is by so much less than Christian. If the Christian Church accepts it, if it does not ceaselessly strive to transform it and meantime ameliorate its consequences, it must inevitably lose the moral leadership of the nation.

If, on the other hand, the Church realises what is involved in the Gospel of the Kingdom, it may have much to suffer in the days that are ahead. But it will gain many whom at present it is in danger of losing, the men and women,—students and reformers as well as artisans,—with a passion for justice and truth, who without its leadership and fellowship, its vast latent resources and great traditions, and the knowledge of that living Saviour Whom it exists to

reveal, will follow wandering fires and fight a hopeless battle.

If the Church is the Body of Christ, existing in the world to express Him and realise His will, it must exist for something more than even "the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints." Is it His whole will for His Body that it should grow large and strong? Does it exist only for the salvation of souls out of a world of humanity which is doomed to corruption and ruin? Does it not exist rather for the hallowing of God's name, the doing of His will, the coming of His kingdom, through the whole world? This was the end for which He used the body of His flesh, and it seems impossible to believe that He has not destined the visible social organism of His Church for the same end even though its vocation should lead to its crucifixion. Such crucifixion may be the way to its resurrection.

In the light of these facts, the ideal of man and the ideal of society which the Church stands for, and the admitted character of the system under which we all live, it seems morally impossible for the Church to be content with that system. Certainly for the Church to identify itself with the maintenance of that system in the years that are before us would be to follow a course of spiritual apostasy and unqualified practical disaster.

The one really solid plea for the existing order is that, men being what they are, it is inevitable, and that we have to make the best of it. It will be seen in the following chapter that this is precisely the plea that is made for the acceptance of warfare, as a necessary evil, so long as men are sinful.



National wealth, it is said, is indispensable for the relief of poverty, for education, for health itself, and no motive is strong enough to keep men at the necessary labour for it but the motive of private gain. Ideally, we might have a better system, but to work such a system we must have Christian men. Until we have Christian men we can do nothing. So, by another road, we come round to the purely individualist Gospel. Once grant the premise, that the present system, just as it stands, is inevitable, and there is no escape from that conclusion. But is that premise true? Are men so radically incapable of any motive but self-interest? Has the war with its "apocalypse of youth" then taught us nothing? We cannot but remember, moreover, that precisely this hopeless pessimistic assumption has been used to block the way of all social progress, that it was used at every stage in the stubborn defence of all the enormities of the early factory system, which no one proposes to-day to restore. No civilised human being wishes to send back children of five years old to the factories or the mines. The same reasoning was used against the abolition of slavery, and yet slavery, too, has gone. When all is said, the Christian Church must have some faith in humanity, and in God, and in its own Gospel of the Kingdom, and it must be ready to take some risks for its faith. The real question before it to-day, in the downfall of the old order, is whether it is going to have the courage and faith to lead the people, or whether it is going to lag in the rear of the march.



*Christianising the Social Order.*

No reasonable Christian wishes to see the Churches, as a whole, plunged into the vortex of mere party strife. But they have a social ideal and a fundamental principle and law, and they cannot be silent about these to-day, of all days in the history of man, where one age is dying before our eyes and another being born.

In this day, of all human days, we have to make clear what the Christian ideal and law for society are. In doing this we have to raise fundamental questions ; we must ask what is involved in Christ's estimate of man. If God created him for His Kingdom, has he the right to live, and to the means of living ? Has he the right to liberty, and to the social conditions that shall secure liberty ? What of the family ? Nothing impresses those who have worked among our men more than their deep and passionate love of home. It is abundantly clear that of all the vital influences moulding their characters for good, none is to-day like this in its refining and humanising power. It is in fact the key of the whole spiritual situation. Christianise the home and it will become a perpetual living sacrament, revealing God through its varied relationships, renewing and cleansing the very springs of life. If it be so, can the Christian Church tolerate any economic order that is hostile to the life and to the sanctity of the home ? Can it endure conditions of society which make wholesome family life well-nigh impracticable for great masses of men and women ? If it does this, it does not know its own vital interest or understand its Lord. Further, is not woman's personality as sacred as man's ?

and if this be so, what does this involve as to her life and liberty to use and develop her own gifts in the service of God and man ? What of children ? If their personalities are sacred, what ought this to imply as to the conditions which surround their earliest years ? If the Church is to be in earnest with its own ideal and law, it has to think out the kind of social and industrial order which the sacredness of personality and the law of love demand for their realisation. It must think out, also, the kind of life which the citizen of such a state must lead if such an order is to live and grow in our modern world, and must teach and enforce that life as the essential Christian life by every resource in its power. No social order can be really Christian that is based on self-interest. The problem to-day is to construct one based on devotion to the common good. No society but this can be fully in accord with the Law of Love.

There are many who will tell us that each of these fundamental questions asked above is a wedge let into the existing system of things, and that if we drive them home we shall split it from top to bottom ; that a system based on these moral valuations will never work, and that we have to content ourselves with one built on man's appetites and passions, with force in the background to maintain order. In the end of the day does not this mean either that the Christian valuation of mankind is not true, or that truth will not work ? The former comes perilously near to a denial of Christ, and the latter to a denial of any spiritual order in the universe. In what has been said we have considered the whole question from the standpoint not of

expediency but of Christian principle. We shall go absolutely astray if we allow the course of action of the Churches, during the stormy years that are undoubtedly coming in the period beyond the war, to be determined by the desire to conciliate either rich or poor. An opportunist policy directed towards the winning of the masses would be only less unworthy than one which endeavoured to conciliate the rich and powerful for the sake of their support in missionary and philanthropic enterprise. The Christian Church cannot in the stormy voyaging ahead find its way by a mere humouring of winds and currents. It must find its way in all deep waters by the compass and by the sun.

But when we have determined what faithfulness to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the law of love demand, it is not only permissible but necessary that we should consider what the practical consequences of unfaithfulness must be. The central theme of this volume is the endeavour to discover what must be done to win the manhood of our country now in the armies to conscious devotion to the Kingdom of God. Few who have any knowledge of the inner mind of our working classes doubt that in the years beyond the war, when the period of exhaustion is over, we shall have a time of great social tension, and, possibly, of revolutionary movements. If the masses of the nation have in their hearts a deep sense of wrong against society, and think of the Churches as supporting that injustice, when they ought, if their professions are true, to be protesting against it, it is as clear as daylight that this sense of wrong will continue to poison the whole situation, and drive

them from indifference into opposition to the organised Churches, and that revealed Christianity which they exist to proclaim.

All who know the history of the feud between the social movements on the Continent of Europe and the organised Churches know what a tragic part the alliance between the Courts and power-holding classes and the Churches has played in the alienation of the masses from the Christian faith. The situation which has long been acute there is as yet less developed here, but the malady is one and the same.

We shall see in the following chapter how close is the affinity between the international struggle and the social unrest. It is certain that the more penetrating minds among those who have fought for us are drawing their own conclusions. They believe that a great system has broken down, and are feeling after one founded not upon the sand of human interest and passion, but upon the rock of everlasting justice and truth.

It is not suggested here that we should be so dazzled by the ideal as to be unable to see and measure the realities. True idealism does not deny the realities, but illuminates them. If the sculptor is to realise his ideal he has not only to let it inspire him, he has to consider the tools which he uses and the marble on which he works. It may well be that the transformation of the existing social order will demand time, as it will assuredly demand courage and sacrifice. The very demand for courage and sacrifice implies a great hardness and resistance in the facts. The State in particular can often only gradually realise its ideals. We have, therefore, to face the paradox that true love of



the ideal may impel the statesman and the nation to frame laws and institutions that come short of the ideal. Otherwise it would be right to coerce loveless men into the ways of love. How far that can be done without increasing existing evil is a matter of degree. Our Lord recognised this when He excused the older law on the ground that it was given for the "hardness of men's hearts."

The embodiment of the Christian ideal in law and in institution which at first, at least, must have physical force behind them is an arduous task requiring a deep knowledge of actual human nature as well as of the Divine ideal. For a time the Church may have to accept under protest a state of society which is sub-Christian, with all the difficult problems for the individual Christian which this implies. The Apostolic treatment of the great human wrong of slavery is a case in point. But such acceptance under protest is a wholly different matter from a cold neutrality, or still more from active support of the wrong, and, most of all, from identifying it with the final ordinance of God. That which was true of a great actual wrong like slavery applies also to a system of society and industry which, like our own, is imperfectly moralised. The Christian Church can only accept it under protest, and as an interim system in process of transition to something nobler, and its whole moral weight should be thrown into that development.

### *The True Line of Action.*

How shall this be done? Some of the criticisms of the Church which we have been considering in an earlier



chapter imply that the true course for the Church is to cease from teaching doctrines and concerning itself about transcendental things, and to devote itself to matters of social reform. These are the criticisms of men who have as yet little interest in the religious side of Christianity and whose sense of social injustice has made social reform their one burning interest. But in truth nothing could be more disastrous. The real trouble lies deeper than can be touched by such a change of method and policy. It lies in our want of the sense of the reality and love of God, and therefore in our want of a due sense of the sacredness of man. The sense of these things can only be restored by a deeper and more constant realising of the truths of the Christian revelation. Therefore "it is only in the measure that the Church has a sure hold of eternal things, a clear vision of a spiritual world of truth and beauty, and an unwavering trust in a God of love and power, with Whom nothing is impossible, that it can hope to regenerate human society and lead mankind into a richer and fuller life. The greatest need of our age is a deepened sense of the living reality and transcendent majesty of God. Western civilisation has become materialistic, vulgar, feverish and unsatisfying. If a new spirit of repose, joy, and creative power is to enter into it, men must learn to bow in worship and admiration before the Almighty and Living God, that through fellowship with Him, their hearts may be made pure and their hands strong."<sup>1</sup> Beneath all questions of social reconstruction lies the need for spiritual regeneration, for the power to drive the programme

<sup>1</sup> "The World and the Gospel," J. H. Oldham, p. 22.

through. This is the peculiar work of the Christian Church. It is only by a deepening of our common experience of "Eternal Life under the eyes of God" that the Church can win new power for the moral transformation of society, and attain and keep that new unity which is vitally necessary for the new age, so rich in glorious possibility, which shall follow the war.

But the doing of this thing must not be made the excuse for the leaving of the other undone.

In what way, then, can the moral forces of the Church, renewed by faith, be brought to bear upon the regeneration of society?

The answer here is two-fold, by example and by precept. The Church in its own common life of fellowship must set the standard for the whole nation; and by its practice of its own principles and by its teaching must make its own standards the prevailing standards in the whole world of Society.

(1) The inner life of the Church. In the first Christian days what gave power to the preaching and teaching was the life of the community behind it. That community was morally so distinct from the life of the pagan and Jewish societies in which it lived that Christians were known as "a new race." To join that new fellowship was often to incur imminent danger and certain loss, but it was to become a sharer in a far deeper and happier life, in which men and women were set free to think of God with gladness, to love and serve one another, and to share in a common hope. Life became keener and purer, there was a new birth of fellowship and human kindness. A new world of God

had been revealed and the issue was a new awakening to humanity. Men who had hitherto been commonplace or even repellent to one another, when seen in the new light, became sacred and dear. It was this sudden deepening and refining of life in the Christian communities that gave the preaching its power. Men wanted to know the secret of the life of fellowship.

Nothing but a new birth of this spirit in the life of the Churches to-day can really save the world. Nothing but this can have the moral force at this critical moment to carry home the message of the Kingdom of God and the sacredness of human personality, so as to make it the living heart of a new and better order of society.

The trouble is that the world has too often imposed its material standards in the Church itself, so that, where of all places the sense of the absolute sacredness of man as man should have been supreme, it has often been well-nigh lost, and with it that spirit of fellowship and brotherhood which is its expression. It has been truly said that the war has surprised us all in a condition of great poverty towards God. Is it not also true that it has surprised us all in a great poverty towards man? Has not this great common contagion of materialism deeply infected the Christian Church itself, so that that which should have kept the soul alive in our nation is itself in urgent need of a new birth of life from the Spirit of God? There is no more striking and cheering feature, as we have seen, in all our evidence than the awakening of a new spirit of fellowship among our men in the field. To many the fact that it was there, amid pain and horror and death, that they first learned to know how

dear man could be to his brother man, will be a memory that lights up this dark and lurid tract of their experience with transfiguring beauty. Outside the bounds of kinship, overleaping barriers of class and rank, innumerable friendships have sprung suddenly into being. The war has been able to do what the rivalries of commerce and industry have failed to do, it has called into life a new spirit of fraternity, loyalty and disinterested sacrifice throughout our armies.

Let us not mistake the true meaning of the facts. The war has not created the capacity for this emancipating spirit of fellowship, the potentiality for it was always there. It will be there when peace has come and all the men of the armies are home again. We know now, and we shall know then, what we ought to have known long ago, that immeasurable moral forces are lying in the youth of our country, awaiting only the summons to life and power.

Is this revelation of what is in man to have no great reaction on the life of the Church of Christ? Shall there be in it no uprising of its own slumbering inner powers of brotherhood and self-dedication? The two go together. It is out of faith in the Divine Kingdom and self-dedication to it that the spirit of fellowship always springs. It springs spontaneously to life, whenever men and women forget themselves in labouring together and contending to the uttermost for a cause on which they feel that all things dear and holy depend. We can never have the spirit of fellowship in its purity, when we say, Come let us have fellowship. It comes spontaneously when men are not thinking about it, when they are awakened by a common



discovery of God, or inspired by a common danger or a common aim.

The awakening of such a spirit of fellowship in the Christian Church is, beyond all else, the vitally necessary thing for its moral force in that Christianising of society and the industrial order which the time demands. Otherwise the unanswerable retort will be, If you in the Churches cannot practise what you preach, how can you expect society to follow these standards? It is certainly for the Church to show its faith by its works.

Nor can it hope to influence a nation that is becoming increasingly democratic unless it is prepared to take all the risks of democratising its own government so far as that is possible. No Church, moreover, that allows rank or wealth as such to determine its policy can hope to fulfil its divine mission in the world that lies before us. The same principle applies to sex and to youth. All must bear their share of responsibility, and all must have their voice in its councils. It may well be that the life of the Churches may be less outwardly peaceful because of such frank recognition of the common privilege and responsibility. But if the tumult be a tumult of life, and if the life be deep and strong enough, then the Churches will be enriched by these very differences. For of life we can never have enough.

The spirit of fellowship in the service of the Kingdom of God must further manifest itself in co-operation and unity between the Churches. This is, clearly, vital to the solution of the problem. A divided Church cannot make any coherent impression on a nation,



nor has it real moral force in calling for a nation, or a world, united in pursuit of the highest ends, albeit such union is obviously one of the greatest social needs of the hour. Fuller discussion of this is reserved for a later chapter.

(2) The question as to how the Christian Church must bring the full force of its own regenerated life to bear upon society still remains. Nothing can surely be clearer than that the great world of to-day is not governed by Christian standards, and for the want of them has come, for the time, to confusion. Is the same thing to recur indefinitely, or is the Kingdom of God at last to prevail? Does not the answer to this question depend, under God, above all on the spiritual force of the witness of the Christian Church to the teaching of its Master? What is essential here is, clearly, the maturing of a convinced common mind in the great world of national and international society, a "moral change" in the life of the peoples.

Besides the witness borne by a living Christian society inspired by the spirit of love among its own members, there are two ways whereby that common mind can be formed, the steady witness of Christian men and women in their life in the world of industry and commerce, and the teaching mission of the Church.

(a) However hard it may be to be a Christian in that world to-day, the thing is possible, and in all its protest against the existing conditions the Church must never forget this, but must call on all its members to take part in that arduous but glorious venture.

One of the weightiest services which the Church can render to human society at the present juncture is that

of educating men and women in true social ideals, and sending them out first to learn for themselves and then to reveal to the world what the application of those ideals involves in the sphere of modern industry. It may well be that the decisive battle for Christianity in their generation will be waged not in the intellectual realm, but in the arena of practical affairs. The question which, baffled by the grave moral perplexities of our present industrial order, tens of thousands of people are asking just now about Christianity is, will it *work*? On the reply which history will give to that question the whole future of religion may depend. The affirmative answer can be furnished not by the Christian thinkers, but only by men and women who, in the stress of the world's life, will prove the power of Christ to solve the most obstinate of our social and industrial problems. The Church of Christ needs to train its sons and daughters to take up this task in a spirit of courageous faith; to enter that world of business not for selfish purposes, but in order to claim it in the Name of Christ; and to recognise in such a life, thus motivated, a Christian vocation—a vocation as real and as sacred as the call of a Christian minister or that of a Christian statesman.

This applies to all grades of industry and commerce, to Labour as well as to Capital. For neither is it easy to-day to be a Christian, to think of life in terms of vocation and service, rather than in terms of wages and profits, but it never has been and never will be easy to be a Christian until history has reached its consummation.

Such truly Christian lives are the leaven of Society.

Were there enough of them and were their witness powerful enough, the whole would be leavened.

(b) Finally, how shall the Church bring the full force of its teaching to bear upon the changing life of Society? That the Christian revelation contains in itself an implicit doctrine of Society as well as of individual life and salvation is certain. Has the Church adequately expressed this Christian conception of Society in the past, and is it doing so to-day? Has it brought home its characteristic ideas to the great world of history and commerce? Has it taught to the nations its ideal of the universal Kingdom of God? It seems impossible to maintain that it has, as a whole, done anything of the kind.

The question arises, Is it possible to do this satisfactorily along the traditional lines of our Church services, or existing educational organisation? What is wanted, as we have seen, is the forming of a convinced common mind. Is such a thing possible in view of the fact that the message of Eternal Life strikes deep beneath all social cleavages, and where faithfully preached and lived should bring together men and women of every social class? Is it possible in such a time of social tension as assuredly lies before us courageously to teach the Christian view of Society, without rending into fragments the unity of the Church? That it will be difficult is certain, and the temptation will always be to rule such themes out of court or to say as little about them as possible. The inevitable effect of that will be to spread the impression that Christianity has no social Gospel at all, and to leave the thinking men and women without help from the Church in problems which

are likely more and more to engross their thoughts. Religious teachers who summon their congregations to high and difficult adventure in daily life have no right to choose the easier road for themselves. If Jesus Christ taught certain things about the value of human personality, we are no more free to ignore these and their practical consequences for us all than we are free to ignore what He taught us regarding the personality of God, and what is involved in that supreme and central truth. On the other hand, the true sphere of the Christian teacher is with principles rather than with programmes. The distinction, though it may not always be possible to observe it rigorously, is deep.

Sometimes the issues demand that teaching should pass beyond principles to guidance as to their application. The question as to what form of European settlement will best carry out the Christian ideal of a League of Nations, or as to what form of industrial organisation at home will best realise the Christian ideal of association for the common good is a case in point. In both of these there is room for reasonable Christian difference of conviction as to details, and it seems essential that the Church should devise means for free discussion of the problems involved. To preach on such themes from a privileged position which does not allow the right of reply, grates upon our national sense of fair play, and it may be added, is not really the right way to produce that conviction which is the essential thing. Just as the acceptance of the missionary idea by the Church has led to a great variety of new methods of making that idea a vital force in the com-

munity, so it cannot be doubted that the full recognition of the Church's duty to preach the Gospel of Society ought to lead to new methods of common study, of discussion and of education.

If the underlying life of the Churches be but deeply enough rooted in God, we need not fear the strain of doing our duty in the coming days. Indeed, we shall surely be the richer for our very antagonisms, because through them we reach a fuller knowledge of the unsearchable riches of Christ.



# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHURCH AND PEACE

The future peace of the world is the one great immediate moral problem to be decided. If the Church is to convert others it must lead in facing this great emergency.

#### *The New Conscience in War.*

All recognise that the war ought never to have happened. The evidence shows how deeply the men loathe war. The Churches are greatly criticised for not preventing it.

The Christian Church must appeal to this awakening conscience of Christendom.

#### *The League of Nations.*

People are being forced to realise that war is an anachronism. But if the League of Nations is to work a moral change is needed.

The true failure of the Churches was the failure to impart any idea of the Divine intention for the human race. The ideal of the Kingdom of God can alone make the League of Nations a reality.

#### *The Power of Ideas.*

Ideas are the mightiest of all forces. But it is not enough to *proclaim* the ideal of the League of Nations.

The Church must *educate* the people in the Christian ideal.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CHURCH AND PEACE

THERE is a close affinity between the subject of this chapter and that on "The Church and Society." The radical cause of social strife is the same as that of war between the nations. But whereas within the nations the struggle is checked and moralised by laws and institutions which maintain order, humanity has as yet devised no effective means in international affairs of holding the passions of men in check. The malady has, therefore, as one might have expected, broken out at the place where the organism was weakest and least developed. If the problem is the same, the Christian solution is the same, the most trenchant assertion of the law of righteousness and love, of the Kingdom of God as over all the nations and as including the whole world of humanity.

But while at bottom the subject is the same, there can be no question that the one great immediate moral problem that is definitely up for decision is that of the future peace of the world. Humanity is once more at the cross-roads. Few issues in human history have been so vast. It is comparable only to

the greatest things in that story, the mighty events that move behind the rise and fall of dynasties and nations as the tide moves behind the rising and falling waves. We are face to face to-day with such decisions as the Western world had to make when it chose between heathenism and Christianity, or between slavery and freedom. We have one great problem directly before us throughout the whole of this volume, the question of how the Christian Church in our country shall retrieve its past losses and enlist the noblest manhood of our country for the Kingdom of God. As we have seen, the solution of that problem has many aspects, educational, evangelistic, social, and so forth. But deeper by far than any question of method is the necessity that, face to face with a great human emergency, the Christian Church shall do what is right, shall lead, instead of lagging behind, the aroused conscience of the world. If the Church will not do this, there ceases to be any adequate spiritual reason for men joining its communion. The power goes out of it. How can it convert others, when it has itself denied the Spirit of God?

### *The New Conscience on War.*

That the conscience of mankind is awakening on the matter of war is certain. The best mind of our nation feels that at this time of day it is morally outrageous that such things should happen. The whole moral force of the case for the Allied nations turns on this, that they believe that they have been fighting that war should never happen again. All

parties to the struggle defend themselves by saying that the guilt of it lies with the other side. This does not imply, as some think, that the guilt of it is equally shared. But what it does conclusively show is that all alike recognise that the war ought never to have happened; that there is guilt in the matter somewhere, to whomsoever it may be imputed. Few among us hold that battle for a noble cause is wrong. But nearly all alike feel to-day that wherever there is war, there has been guilt somewhere; which is just to imply that the conscience of Christendom recognises to-day that war is an abominable anachronism.

Much unsolicited evidence has come to us revealing how deeply the men in the armies loathe war. They will fight for liberty and the future as bravely and doggedly as their forefathers fought against the Spaniard and the Corsican. But the moral situation is different to-day from what it was when the Armada was coming up the Channel. There is a new temper regarding the whole business of warfare, which, there is reason to believe, exists through all the armies in the field in varying degree. Partly, no doubt, this is due to the fact that, in certain respects, for hundreds of years there has been no war so hideous as this. Of what war has it been true that men have had for months to live among the unburied dead? But in part, also, it is due to a deepening sense of individual freedom, of the rights of human personality, and to the feeling that these are in the long run incompatible with militarism. However that may be, our evidence reveals a deep and widespread hatred of war, which our statesmen will have to reckon

with when the men come home. What is the Christian Church going to do with this new conviction? It is not a reasoned or clear judgment. The men as a whole are certainly not pacifist. They have grimly accepted the inevitable. They do not see any road out of the terrible entanglement into which they believe "the politicians" have brought them. They are rather possessed by the idea that human nature is unchangeable. The most of them have not the least idea that Christianity has anything to do with the civilisation of the world. Any astute leader can therefore play upon their national prejudice. They have not thought anything out. But they certainly do feel that such things as they are enduring and witnessing could only have happened in a world that was out of joint. The more intelligent among them link up the war with the social and political system which has resulted in this breakdown, and they believe that that system stands condemned by its issue. Are they wrong in this conviction? They go a long way further. As we have seen, their greatest religious difficulty is "God and the War." The men who are blaming God for the war are not likely to acquit the Churches. As a matter of fact, they do not. As we have seen, it is one of the greatest grounds of complaint against the Churches that they did not prevent the war. It is the culminating proof of their inefficiency.

Now all this is new since Armada days, new, even, since Waterloo. Something in the human spirit has awakened since then, something on which the whole future course of history may depend. It is essential that the Christian Church should realise this



and should act upon it. The complaint of many men in the armies against the Churches is that they have not said anything more about the war than the newspapers and "politicians" have said. It is not that they deny the truth of what has been said about patriotism, but they feel, with Edith Cavell, that "patriotism is not enough." It will not be enough when the war is over to thank God for victory, and settle down in the old ways.

It is of incalculable importance that the Christian Church should appeal to this awakening conscience of Christendom. If it has eyes to see it, there is here, in the revolt against war, the beginning of a new world. It corresponds to the conviction of sin in an individual soul, and really is due to the inspiration of the Divine Spirit and the discipline of the moral order of the world.

### *The League of Nations.*

All progressive political thought is now turning towards the idea of a League of Nations. By the time that this volume is in the hands of readers, it seems likely that the elements of such a vast reconstitution of human society—for nothing less than this is involved—will be familiar to all our people. What has brought an idea so revolutionary into the foreground? All intelligent men who look before and after see that the compulsion of history is forcing men on to an hour of decision. They feel that civilisation cannot endure if such experiences as we have been passing through are to be multiplied and intensified. The whole structure

of world society has become so interwoven that world war is an anachronism. Mankind cannot face the repetition of such things unless it is prepared to face dissolution. The men who used to think world peace an impracticable ideal are beginning to see that the alternative way is impracticable also.

The nobler mind of our country is expressed in these words of Lord Grey : " If the millions of dear lives that have been given in this war are to have been given not in vain, if there is to be any lasting compensation for the appalling suffering of the last three years, the defeat of the Prussian will to power, however it is brought about, will not by itself be enough. Out of that defeat must come something constructive, some moral change in international relations."

But no one who knows anything of human nature or human history can think we shall have here anything but a beginning. The real problem is not to frame a League of Nations but to work it. It will take every reserve of spiritual energy which Christendom possesses—and more—to prevent the League of Nations from going the way of "the Holy Alliance" and "the European Concert."

The idea of the League is a splendid new birth of reason and idealism in a world of material interests and "diplomacy," and the future of the human race depends on its promise coming to maturity. But, as its projectors see clearly enough, what is needed is a "moral change." The sheer horror of the war, and alarm at what the next war may be like, have no doubt produced enough "change" to give the League a start. But the real problem of the future is whence

shall come the moral force to carry it on, when the horror of the war is a gradually fading memory. Be it ever remembered that the men who will have the first share in carrying out the ideals of the League will be for the most part men trained in the old tradition, and that the great masses of our people, as of other peoples, have little or no ideal to guide them how to think of the life of nations, and little faith or hope in a nobler order of human life.

The men blame the Churches for not having prevented the war. But it may well be questioned if the power of all the Churches taken together could in 1914 have prevented the war. Their real failure came long before that. Their true failure has consisted in their having been unable to impart to the peoples of Europe any real Christian idea of what "Christendom" ought to be. Nay, if we are to get to the bottom of the matter, their real failure lies in their having been unable to bring home to the Christian peoples any adequate idea of what Humanity ought to be, and of the Divine intention for the whole human race. Their failure here has, indeed, been complete and disastrous. There can be no doubt that the Christian revelation in its Law of Love and doctrine of God and of man, and world-wide Gospel of the Kingdom of God, contained, from the first, implicitly, the ideal of an associated Humanity with each nation working out its divine vocation in a brotherhood of the peoples, with the Kingdom of God over all. Medieval Europe at least dreamed of this, but failed in its scheme of things to allow adequately either for the freedom of the individual, or for the tremendous new forces of nationality, and so was rent in

fragments. But since these convulsions, the idea of any great common end over the nations has been too dim and weak to exert any real restraining power. The Church has failed to bring home to the modern peoples the truth implicit in its own Gospel that each nation can only come to its highest when it realises the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, that it has national rights because it has national duties to God and humanity, and that, like the Son of Man, its true glory is to serve mankind. This is the one ideal that can inspire and guide mankind to-day, and make the League of Nations a permanent reality. But it is equally true that it is not yet in possession of our own or of any people. That it is not in possession of the men in our armies the evidence makes perfectly clear. Most of them know nothing of the Kingdom of God.

Further, their ideas of other peoples are of the most prejudiced and elementary kind. It is significant, however, to learn that the rank and file are more sympathetic to a League of Nations when it is put before them than are the officers. But the mind of the men is confused and uncertain. It is a spirit of protest against present evils, rather than one of enlightened resolution. It may very easily be turned aside, therefore, into courses that are reactionary or into courses that are destructive. In all this the army is simply a reflex of average opinion at home, as everyone who is acquainted with average public opinion is well aware. The Christian ideal and interpretation of national life are simply not in possession.

Here, above all, is the true sphere of the Christian



Church. We have seen what comes of excluding a great domain of human life from the sway of Christ. The world is beginning to be convinced of sin by the terrible consequences. It is at least beginning to look for light and guidance. "The soil is crying out for the seed."

*The Power of Ideas.*

Prior to the war, also, there was a very unenlightened contempt for the power of ideas among our people. History might have taught us wisdom here, and it has done so again with shattering conclusiveness. The ideas that were scattered abroad in France in the decay of the old *régime* clothed themselves with thunder and flame in the Revolution and are echoing and lightening still through the world.

The ideas propagated by men of letters in the Russia of the last half-century have convulsed the whole of Eastern Europe and their tremors have reached our own shores.

The ideas taught since 1870 in the universities and schools of Germany have begotten a dragon's brood of madness and cruelty and death. Ideas are the mightiest of all forces when the conditions are present for their development. We are entering a new epoch in human history, and the question of questions is as to the moral basis of that new epoch.

Never was louder call to the Christian Church than comes to it to-day to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

But something more is needed than the proclamation



of the ideal of a humanity associated in a League of Nations. This ideal to the immense majority of our people is new. They are attracted by it for the moment, but they do not see all, or nearly all that it implies, what sacrifices of old and deeply-rooted convictions and prejudices are necessary on their part, if it is to be successfully carried through. They want it, but it is questionable if they are ready to pay the necessary price. It is here that the best energies of the Churches are necessary, here that moral leadership of the whole nation is demanded of them. They, too, will have a price to pay if they are to fulfil their mission. It is easy to plead for a League of Nations to-day. It will be harder to-morrow. But its very difficulty is an inspiration when the call of God is so clear.

How shall it be done? That is a matter for the Church itself to determine. It is quite clear that the peace of the world, and still more, the association of the peoples of the world for one great common end, will depend more and more on the democracies of the world. Unless, therefore, the Church of Christ is to stand silent and helpless throughout the crises of the national life of the future, it must educate the masses of the people in the Christian ideal, and if it has not the means for this purpose it must develop them. It is a fair question if its present methods and organisation are adequate to the task. They date in the main from a period in which this great sphere was not recognised, as it is increasingly recognised to-day, as part of the Church's true mission. So was it a century ago with the ideal of the World Mission. But that ideal created new organisations, new literature, new methods, and so

no doubt will it be with this propaganda of the Kingdom of God. The essential point is that in this great moral emergency of the human race the Church of Christ must lead and not follow, must cast the fire of new and nobler ideas into the minds of men, must prepare for and proclaim a new day of the Son of Man.

## ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER VI

#### EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS TEACHING

Three conclusions may be drawn from the evidence about religious education: (1) the men have not learnt to think; (2) they have forgotten what they were taught; (3) they have kept little conscious relationship with God.

In our educational methods we have not studied the children. Illustration from the old and new methods of teaching English.

Religious education especially should teach the pupil to seek that he may find. It has largely failed to do this.

The different stages of development in children should be met by suitable teaching.

Though some formulas are necessary, in general the substance of truths should be taught first, and formularies later.

Similarly, the adolescent must be taught in his own, not the adult's, terms. There must be room for free discussion.

The new teaching must rely on new motives, not on sheer duty or the competitive spirit. The co-operative method in education.

Authority is not enough; the individual must re-discover the Truth possessed by the Church.

The authority of Jesus—*ἐξουσία*. He will give this same power to the Churches if they trust His Spirit.

## CHAPTER VI

### EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS TEACHING

READERS of the preceding chapter are now invited to consider three conclusions drawn from the evidence there set forth. The first applies to education generally. One of the questions addressed to our correspondents was, "What are the men *thinking* about Christ, the Church, the War?" To this many replied, "They are not thinking at all." Some of the answers proceed to explain that the conditions of active service are not favourable to any process of independent thought. But when all allowance has been made for the blunting effects upon mind and temper of weariness and routine, we may still look for antecedent causes to account for poverty of intellectual initiative, for torpid acquiescence in material theories of life, for deadness to the higher satisfactions of the spirit. And it will at least be a wholesome exercise to face the trenchant generalisation of the chaplain who writes, "Englishmen do not think and never have thought. They have not been either helped or expected to. Their education has been merely imposition, the learning of lessons, not the stimulus to think." The second conclusion is that many whose religious education has not been neglected have forgotten

the definite instruction they have received. And the third and saddest of all indicates that a very large proportion have retained hardly any conscious relationship with the Person to whom that teaching was designed to introduce them.

In the present chapter an attempt will be made to explore one or two causes which we believe to be centrally concerned in this triple failure, and to examine them in relation first to general, and then to religious, education. It should, however, be premised that for the present purpose the word education is not used in its broadest sense. It would take us too far to follow the problem into its wider implications, and to examine such conditions as the child's surroundings and atmosphere, the influence of home, the personality of the teacher, the co-operation between him and the parent. We must be content to take a narrower ground, and ask how far the defects are chargeable to imperfect methods of teaching. The evidence before us has confirmed an impression which many teachers themselves are ready enough to admit, namely, that we have been concerned too much with the practice of memory, too little with the exercise of imagination ; too much with the acquisition of knowledge, too little with the development of the faculties that deal with knowledge acquired ; too much with the reproduction of statements imposed by authority, and too little with the wakening of zest and interest and natural appetite in the pupil, with his desire to express himself, to create something out of his particular experience, to strike out on quests of his own, and to satisfy the instincts of conscience and need peculiar to his age.



In brief, and this is a central cause of our failure, we have studied the children less carefully than the subjects we think it good for them to learn.

An example, simple if somewhat crude, will make the contrast clearer. Here are two reports on the work of schoolboys in "English," that is to say, the reading and writing of the mother tongue: "He is the kind of boy who thinks it meritorious and educative to commit to memory lists of places or people, or products, or plagues." "He loads his memory with undigested facts, which he reproduces without thought of reference to the subject-matter. The result is that he writes astounding nonsense, and is quite content with it. He lacks imagination. He was excellently grounded in Latin." Teachers of experience will have no difficulty in connecting such results as this with a bad "English" method now happily almost extinct. A book was read very slowly in an edition provided with notes consisting of scraps of information, philological, archæological, or grammatical, each of them interesting enough to some advanced students, but rightly repulsive to the boy. Every lesson was prepared in the expectation of a paper of questions which he must answer on the following morning, the remainder of the lesson being occupied in hearing the master talking about the book. Hence the taste for "lists," and the satisfaction of "answering questions." No wonder that "he lacks imagination." The procedure described has been warmly defended on the score of thoroughness, accuracy, and the moral value of drudgery. And it is not for a moment denied that such aims ought to be included in every curriculum. But they have been dominant in the teaching of subjects,

and English is one of them, in which they ought to be subordinate. The boy who had mastered such a lesson may have been working hard. But what is the result of his industry? Has his mind been strengthened or enriched, or stimulated? He is the stronger, perhaps, for an exercise of memory, but the fruits will surely be short-lived, for will he not cast off as soon as he can a burden so imposed on him? It has been wisely said that the one real object of all education is to leave a man in the condition of continually asking questions. Has such work excited his curiosity, or left him with a desire to repeat the experience on his own account? Or will he not rather avoid such books, and perhaps all books, for years to come?

In the new "English" methods, now happily superseding the old, the aim is not so much that the boy shall remember facts or master difficulties, as that by an effort of intelligence and imagination he shall make his way into new regions, find himself at home there, and express in his own language his sense of new relationships. If the book or play is within his understanding, and touches his own experience, it will open his eyes to new scenes and new company, and he will himself move among the characters. He will take more delight in writing an exercise which addresses him to their situations, or bids him construct some sequel or offshoot of their story, than in composing a theme on "The Sea," or "A day in Spring." In short, the boy will be brought into the book, instead of the book, or as much of it as he can hold, into the boy. Thus in proportion as this method is successful it bears all the fruits of vital teaching. First, it develops the mental

power appropriate to the subject, namely, imagination, or, as Wordsworth calls it, "Reason in her most exalted mood." Secondly, whatever facts and ideas the pupil has gathered from his reading he will have made his own. They have become part of his personal experience, and therefore they abide. Thirdly, it meets, satisfies, and at the same time stimulates one of his natural desires. Having enjoyed a book so read, he is more likely to seek of his own accord further enjoyment from a similar source. In short, the study has left him stronger, richer, and possessed of an appetite.

More especially in the teaching of religion must we look to the personal discoveries of the pupil, as well as to the instruction we impart to him. "Seek and ye shall find," and "To him that is *athirst* will I give of the fountain of the water of life freely." It is true that knowledge of God must be "caught rather than taught." But on the other hand there is ample scope for right and wrong method in imparting knowledge *about* Him, and it seems reasonable to apply the same three tests of vital teaching to our attempts. How far then has religious truth been so conveyed as to develop the pupil's spiritual faculties, to increase his stock of religious experience, and to make him hunger and thirst for more?

In view of the situation revealed to us, it is proposed to apply these criteria to what may be called the traditional method, and then, without venturing on practical proposals, with which this book is not primarily concerned, to suggest the lines on which, in the light of our present experience, we are called to new ventures. Enough has already been said to show how small,

in proportion to the teaching given, seem to be its fruits in the faculty by which men live towards God—the power, that is, to see Him, to hear Him and communicate with Him; how weak also is the vital hold our men have gained upon the facts and doctrines of the Christian faith. The evidence of religious ignorance is widespread and positive. But the most serious and arresting answer of all comes to the question whether the teaching has stimulated the natural desire of all men for relationship with God. Attention has already been drawn to symptoms of something more than indifference to Christianity as the men understand it. In the minds of a great many there appears to exist actual aversion from what they imagine it to be. It is encouraging to find little or no evidence of positive hostility to the Person of Jesus Christ. But many are shy and suspicious of all existing attempts to interpret Him, to establish connection with Him, and to present Him to the world; and we can hardly escape the conclusion that the seeds of this active indifference have been sown at an early age. How far this is due to unsuitable teaching, and how far to other causes, is yet an open question, and it may fairly be claimed that the spirit and methods of Reformed Sunday Schools have already made their mark. Indeed the evidence quoted elsewhere of their success is one of the most encouraging features of the situation, and sounds a clear call to a more energetic extension of this movement. For it has still to win its way, and there can be no doubt that generally speaking our “religious instruction” is gravely at fault.

Have we, on the whole, unfolded the Christian reve-



lation by methods to which the child can respond, and in the order natural to the successive stages of his spiritual development ? Have we tried to fit religious thought into life, as life is for the time being seen by the child ? If not, we can begin to explain the failure. For to present to him the perfect truth in a form which he cannot assimilate, and therefore instinctively rejects, is to create in his mind a subconscious repulsion which may develop later into a distaste for the truth itself. To impose an adult theology upon the youthful mind is to deaden its own response to God. If we are to help the children to "live unto Him" it is not enough to be sure that we know the truth about Him ; we must also know the truth about the child, and we must believe that He will give it us. We must share the power that was in Jesus of "knowing what is in the mind of man." It is only now being realised that the mental and spiritual growth of children normally proceeds by stages fairly well defined. It is not to be supposed that every child proceeds regularly from one to the other at the age indicated. But there is good reason to accept the working hypothesis of three phases between four and fourteen, each showing a sufficiently definite group of ideals and impulses, which create in him spontaneous interests and incentives of which the teacher, if he is to be successful, must take account. He must, at each stage, emphasise those aspects, forms, and applications of his subject to which the child can naturally respond, otherwise the teaching is largely useless, and also possibly harmful, for the child re-acts against it.

When a child enters an elementary school, he is at



an age in which he passes easily into the world of imagination, containing persons and objects created by himself or suggested to him. Thus he can be led by allegorical and other stories, by pictures and other symbols, as well as by atmosphere and direct instruction, to a natural intercourse with Jesus, his Friend, Who loves him, trusts him, is interested in his concerns, and is eager to hear and speak to him about them when he prays ; the Giver of good, the Inspirer of joy and beauty, the Lord of wonder, and the Revealer of the Father, Whose children may be happy and free from care because He cares for them. At or about seven begins the " age of self-assertion," when the child's will comes into more definite conflict with other wills, and attraction towards right proceeds from examples of the right kind of self-assertion. This is the time for stories of Christian heroes, and of Christ alone against the world in a losing conflict, which He won. From this stage he passes at about the age of eleven into another, in which the individual begins to merge into the group. It has been called the " team age," or " the age of loyalty." At this time the child becomes aware of evil as an organised power within and around him, and Christ is to be revealed anew as his Leader in a great and romantic adventure against it. The child is not fighting on Christ's side for himself or alone. He is one of a great host, the Church. Therefore his training and instruction must lay at this stage a special emphasis on illustrations and reminders of membership already experienced in family and school, and all that membership involves, except its definitions. These should wait until the child shows by inquiry, direct or

implied, his ripeness for a reasoned presentation of truths the substance of which he already possesses ; and if he has appropriated the content, he will welcome the form which summarises it. But to teach by formula before the child is able by his own experience to respond to the indwelling truth is to set the child in wrong relation to that truth, and, worse still, in wrong relation to the Authority in whose name the formula is imposed.

But it will be urged that Christ cannot be separated from Catholic doctrine, or presented to His children apart from that in which He dwells among them, the Church, with its treasury of truth and its channels of grace. And if the form of teaching is not wholly intelligible to the child, do we not all possess treasures in words, which we value the more because they have yielded their full meaning slowly ? We have to commit them first to memory, but we trust, not in vain, that what we say "we know not now, but shall know hereafter."

All this is true enough. It is impossible to teach religion without formula of any kind, and there are some statements, verses, prayers, such as the Lord's Prayer, and children's hymns, which a child will possess and enjoy first, and interpret later. But there are others which must be deferred until he is ripe for them. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." Yet it is often taken for granted that every piece of doctrine we offer will, somehow and soon enough, fill itself with content. The docile child accepts it, and even finds a poor merit in repeating and professing to believe it ; but it will have little relation to practice, and the frequent

result, as with our soldiers *en masse*, is either that it is subconsciously rejected, or that, having no emotional lodgment in the soul, it atrophies away. The problem is how to adjust authority, on the one hand, with interest and experience on the other. It is suggested that at least two conditions are necessary before doctrine, setting forth God's relationship with man, can be vitally and easily appropriated. First, the relationship with God must be established before it is explained, and secondly, as with catechumens in the Early Church, the substance of formal doctrine must be experienced before the form can be safely imparted. The evangelist precedes the teacher. It has been proved possible to teach catechisms naturally and effectively through ideas rather than in set forms of words. The common basis of all catechisms is contained in a single verse of Scripture : " They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in the prayers." All Churches, whatever the differences in worship and order which divide them one from another, share as a common possession and a common responsibility this fourfold inheritance of doctrine, fellowship, sacrament, and prayer. But just as in the Early Church these principles were planted and proved in life before they emerged in treatises, so must it be in the training of the young. By teaching about Jesus attuned to each stage of their development ; by encouraging the social instinct and experience of the smaller memberships in family and school ; by free use of token and symbol, in which great truths, taken for granted, are visibly embodied ; by practice in prayer-concentration, alone

and in company, but without direction to any set form of words—by these the children can be prepared for the form which shall enshrine the ideas and habits into which they have grown.

Having explored the possibility of a truer presentation of Christ and the Christian life to children, we have to face the harder task of guiding adolescents (14—18 or more) to a vision and an ideal which shall in like manner be their own. How shall the teacher set about it? Shall he offer them the truth in the form in which it grips his own interest and secures his own allegiance, trusting that through the channels of his personal sympathy, his friendship and leadership, it will so recommend itself as to abide when his friendship is withdrawn? If so, he is leaving to them the work of translating into their own terms and for their own use conceptions which postulate experience and outlook not yet attained. Unaided they are not equal to the task. They have tried it, and failed. It seems to them that they were invited to the aims and standards and consolations of the middle-aged, and they found them unattractive. Anyhow, they could be laid aside till a more convenient season. Adult piety has little immediate appeal to them. The service of Christ, as elderly people picture and practise it, makes too weak a claim upon the young. Perhaps it is too passive, too resigned. Yet there exists a devotion, a discipline, a satisfaction of adolescence in Christ, as natural and appropriate to the sentiment and energy of that age as are the later interpretations to those of fuller years. It remains for them and us to seek it. If St. Paul was all things to all men, so we must be young to the



young, if by any means some may be saved. The task demands psychological study as well as personal sympathy. It demands also their co-operation. Neither will they find it without our guidance, nor we without their help. That help must be frankly invited and honestly used. There is in teaching a false path of "discovery," in which the conclusion is arranged beforehand, and the children are by leading questions coaxed or driven up to it. Sooner or later such attempts are detected and resented. And of all subjects religion will suffer most from intellectual dishonesty. We need to know and continually refresh our knowledge of their point of view. They must see Christ, if at all, not from our ground but from theirs. The doubts and difficulties that must be met and satisfied are theirs, not ours. Therefore in class or lecture room must be left for free discussion. The methods of the Bible Class must approach those of the Study Circle. A well-tried and successful combination of the two has been developed by the Tutorial Class of the Workers' Educational Association, and the Adult Schools, in which a lesson or lecture is followed by a period in which questions are asked, not by the teacher, to find out how much the class has remembered, but by the class, to show him where he has not convinced. Might we not experiment on some such lines in our Continuation Schools? The difficulty of large classes would be partly met by a lecture to an almost unlimited number of pupils, who would then break up into small groups for discussion under leaders, each of whom would report to the lecturer for his further comment the main points that arose.



In the new teaching there should be less room for motives and methods, which have hitherto been over-emphasised. We have rested too securely on the discipline of learning out of sheer duty. "This is what you must learn. One day you will recognise the value of it." We have reinforced it by a system of marks and orders and prizes, all appealing to the pupil's individual interest. But the competitive instinct will sufficiently assert itself for all wholesome purposes with far less encouragement than it has hitherto received; and it is now generally recognised that we shall do well to supplement it by a more direct appeal to incentives of a higher order. It is, for instance, a nobler ambition for a boy to excel, not others, but himself. To beat one's own record is an aim no less natural, and far healthier, than to prove one's superiority over someone else. And what shall be the criterion of this self-imposed standard? It will be all the more valuable if it is based, not on the capacity for acquiring knowledge in the form of facts imparted, but on the power of dealing with knowledge gained. "Let them see," says Locke, "by what they have learned that they can do something which they could not do before." A whole series of possibilities lies in the reinforcement, if not the replacement, of the competitive by the co-operative method in education, some of which are set forth in Mr. Kenneth Richmond's "Education for Liberty," especially in Chapter IV. All these suggestions are of special importance in view of the present tendency of boys and girls to earn their own living and arrive at economic independence at a very early age. We may deplore it; but if, as seems likely,

it is to be established, the fact must be faced. And it means that in religious teaching we must deal with them rather as men and women than as children. We must be guides rather than instructors, leaders in co-operative effort rather than imposers of tasks. And it is possible to make them aware that their ultimate aim and ours lies not in the mastery of text-books, but in new vital powers unto God, power to see Him, to hear Him, to move towards Him, and to exert our wills in fellowship with one another and in harmony with His.

But an objection may be urged from the same point of view as that suggested and met on page 350. It may be asked, "Are you not making religion solely a matter of individual impulse and discovery? What of corporate authority and discipline? Has not the truth already been discovered for them? Has it not already been committed to the Church, and is it not enough to go on commending to our young people the authority of the Church of which they are, or are soon to be, full members?" To this it may be replied that on a broad view of our evidence it is not enough. If the Church possesses all the Truth, the individual must no less rediscover it. That every teacher should himself be a loyal and practising member of a Church is of paramount importance. And there will be opportunities, other than those contemplated above, of instruction in the membership obligations of each several Church, its worship, its sacraments, its distinctive doctrines and its history. But it has become clear that such authoritative teaching does not meet the whole need or exhaust all the possibilities. Perhaps we need to

revise our conception of the word "authority" in the religious sense. "He taught them with authority and not as the Scribes." On what did this impression rest? The word *ἐξουσία* means power derived from a source, beyond and behind its exercise. The source of Jesus' power was recognised and readily acknowledged by the simple and unprejudiced. They were unconsciously aware that He was revealing the Most High long before He proclaimed "If ye have seen Me, ye have seen the Father also." But not from its source alone would they have accepted it so eagerly as to leave their work and homes for days together and follow Him across the hills of Galilee. The attraction for them lay even more strongly in its exercise. For He was never careful to claim His authority, or prove it or argue about it, as were the Scribes. He allowed it to assert itself. And this it could do because He spoke as Man amongst men, in terms of their own lives, with knowledge love-given of His hearers' minds, how they worked, and what experience they had to work upon. That was why His words were found to be full of grace and truth, and full of authority too. Without this power how could He have revealed the Father unto them?

And this power He is ready to bestow upon the Churches now, if for His sake they will boldly commit themselves to the guidance of His Holy Spirit into all Truth. The enterprise to recover and use it is one in which they may well combine. It may be that a united endeavour to achieve it will prove another step towards a wider unity among them. But the task must be essayed in the very spirit of youth itself, the spirit

of adventure and of hope. A call is sounding in the ears of ministers, of teachers, of parents, of educated men and women to learn how to teach. "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught." It is a call for patient study, lightened by imagination and inspired by courage. In the light of new knowledge and newly realised experience, we must not be fearful of experiments. Some of them may fail, yet point the way to success beyond failure. For God has surely new light yet to break out of His Church, new fruits for her labours, new rewards for her faith.

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NOTE.—A few out of many publications are here recommended to those who would study this question further, or join the inquiry suggested.

On Child Psychology, mainly from the religious standpoint :—

|  |                 | <i>s.</i> | <i>d.</i> |
|--|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| "The Unfolding Life" .....             | Lamoreaux ..... | 2         | 6         |
| "Child Nature and Child Nurture" ..... | St. John .....  | 2         | 6         |
| "The Dawn of Character" .....          | Mumford .....   | 3         | 6         |
| "The Dawn of Religion" .....           | Mumford .....   | 1         | 9         |
| "The Boy Problem" .....                | Forbush .....   | 4         | 6         |
| "The Girl in her 'Teens" .....         | Slattery .....  | 2         | 0         |
| "Religious Education" .....            | Garvie .....    | 1         | 0         |

On Modern Methods in Sunday Schools :—

|   |                   |   |   |
|---|-------------------|---|---|
| "Why Grade?" .....                              | Ritchie .....     | 3 |   |
| "The Problems of Adolescence" .....             | Garvie .....      | 3 |   |
| "New Methods in Junior Sunday<br>Schools" ..... | Hetty Lee .....   | 1 | 6 |
| "The Graded School" .....                       | Emily Huntley ... |   | 6 |
| "The Child in the Midst" .....                  | Hayes .....       | 2 | 6 |

On materials for lessons :—

*s. d.*

|  |                                 |   |   |
|--|---------------------------------|---|---|
| “ The Church’s Garden of Children ” .....            | Ward and Phyllis<br>Dent .....  | 2 | 6 |
| “ Heroes of the Faith ” .....                        | Phyllis and Doris<br>Dent ..... | 2 | 6 |
| “ Stories and Story-Telling ” .....                  | St. John.....                   | 2 | 6 |
| “ The Way of Worship ” .....                         | Hetty Lee .....                 | 2 | 6 |
| “ The Catechism Idea ” .....                         | Phyllis and Doris<br>Dent ..... | 2 | 6 |
| “ A Course of Bible Study for<br>Adolescents ” ..... | Garvie.....                     | 2 | 6 |

Further guidance may be obtained from the Church of England Sunday School Institute, 13, Serjeant’s Inn, Fleet Street, E.C. 4, or the Sunday School Union (56, Old Bailey, London.)



# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER VII

### MORALE AND MORALS

#### (a) *Unconscious Christianity.*

The evidence has shown the men as a strange mixture of good and evil—but the good predominates.

Has Christianity anything to do with their virtues? The proof here is cumulative. Its importance for a true understanding of the situation.

(b) *Purity.* How then are we to explain the divergence from the Christian standard of purity? The ideal is not so much abandoned as considered impracticable.

The refusal to face the facts and a despair of moral victory are the great obstacles.

Factors in the present state of affairs.

(a) The unruly heart of man.

(b) Drink.

(c) Ignorance.

(d) Social and Economic conditions.

Housing—sweating wages to girls—the living-in system—Economic conditions and conventions which prevent early marriage.

Conventional restraints are largely swept away; we need new educational methods and moral ideas in their place. A positive ideal of the worth and beauty of sexual life is needed.

Some necessary steps towards national purity. Avoidance of regulation, etc.—a fair law as between men and women—reinforced powers against the exploitation of vice—no mutual recriminations between the sexes—housing reform—a sound economic base for the family—adequate dealing with the drink problem—provision of facilities for athletics and social intercourse—moral education—above all, the proclamation and realisation of the whole spiritual truth as to sexual life.

Moral scepticism as to the possibility of purity for man must be overthrown; it is a denial of Christ and of God.

## CHAPTER VII

### MORALE AND MORALS

#### *Unconscious Christianity.*

THE endeavour has been made in an earlier chapter of this volume<sup>1</sup> to set forth plainly and sincerely the exact moral situation as it is mirrored in the evidence before us. It tells a strange story of human nature in its baffling blend of good and evil, clay and fire. On all the main outlines of the picture there is unanimity. It is impossible to doubt that they are true. Yet can they be the same men of whom such different things are recorded? It is clear that in many cases they are the same. The same papers will often emphasise both sides without showing any trace of crediting the heroic and self-sacrificing virtues to the clean and temperate men alone. Indeed they not infrequently emphasise the fact that it is otherwise.

What are we to make of a picture so strangely blended of light and shadow? The first and most important question is: Which predominates, which is to be taken as fundamental? Here, happily, the evidence is deeply reassuring. Grave as are the failings and sins, they are only to be understood when we take them as

<sup>1</sup> Part I. Ch. VI.

blots on a humanity in the main noble. This is a fact which any one of our readers may verify for himself by enquiry of anyone who really knows the men. The evidence submitted to the reader in the earlier part of this volume surely establishes this. Have we at home done as well as the men in the field? The question should search us all.

A story of the first winter of the war may illustrate this point. A soldier on leave came into a railway carriage clad in a sheepskin and covered with the mud of the trenches. He apologised to his neighbour for coming in among respectable citizens. "My dear sir," said the other, "you make all of us feel shabby!" It is safe to say that that is precisely what all right-thinking people feel about our men. They have shown a courage, a self-sacrifice and a cheerful endurance that, as one of our witnesses has said, "make our civilian loyalties look mean."

Now we must ask the question, Has Christianity had anything to do with their splendid manifestation of great qualities? The question is not academic. On its answer turns a large part of the argument of this volume. Has the Christian Church failed in our country, or has it, taking the long view of history, on the whole succeeded? Have we in dealing with the majority of our countrymen to deal with an essentially pagan population, or with one which is in some measure Christian without knowing it?

The first writer to see this issue and to state it with singular freshness and insight was the "Student in Arms." He has been followed in the main lines of his argument both by Mr. Talbot in his "Thoughts on

Religion at the Front " and by the authors of " Papers from Picardy." All these writers have obviously exerted a marked influence on many of our correspondents. Mr. Talbot has put the matter forcibly : " I am eager to acclaim the wonderful quality of spirit which men of our race display in this war and to claim it as Christian and God-inspired. Deep in their hearts is a great trust and faith in God. It is an inarticulate faith expressed in deeds. The top levels of their consciousness are filled with grumbling and foul language and physical occupations ; but beneath lie deep spiritual springs, whence issue their cheerfulness, stubbornness, patience, sincerity, humility, and willingness to suffer and to die. They declare by what they are and do that there is a worth-whileness in effort and sacrifice. Without saying so they commit themselves to ' the Everlasting Arms.' "

The question at issue is often confused. Why, it is said, should we claim these virtues as due to Christian influence ? Why not say that they are simply human ? All men are made in God's image, and in some measure illuminated by the indwelling Light. That is certainly the Christian view. It is involved in the Fatherhood of God, the Incarnation, the doctrine of Sin itself, which implies an inward ideal and law. Even the pagan religions in their nobler elements are inspired by the inward Light. One of the least tolerant among the Fathers of the Church spoke of heathen virtue as springing from " the soul naturally Christian." But there is a deep and clear distinction between pagan and Christian ideals none the less, and that distinction is due to the

teaching and example of Jesus Christ. Therefore the real question for us here is not simply that of the inward Light, about which we may all agree, but whether, also, there is traceable the influence of the Christian ideal, or whether the great virtues we see in the men are simply those which, for example, were found of old in the armies of Rome, or may be found to-day in the armies of Japan.

There are certainly grave reasons for holding the latter view. The men do not, as we have seen, associate the virtues they admire with Christianity as they see it. But that may well, as we believe, be due to misrepresentation and misunderstanding. Far more grave is it that in a matter so vital as that of sexual relationship the standards of a large number do not seem to be Christian, and their practice certainly is not.

This matter is so important that it is reserved for the closing section of this chapter. It is enough now to say that it seems to be rather the possibility of the Christian ideal that is questioned here than its nobility. The man who seemingly practises it is generally recognised as living the higher life. Much is implied in this involuntary confession of what makes a "white man."

We return to the question whether we may call the great virtues which the men have shown, Christian.

The proof here is cumulative. We may admit that in matters of courage and endurance, the strictly military virtues, the evidence is indecisive. All strong races when put to the test of war display these virtues. But in the great wealth of generosity to the



vanquished, unselfishness, half-humorous humility, and chivalry shown by our men, which have knit them to the hearts of all who have worked among them, we must surely read the influence of the Son of Man. If these virtues are not Christian virtues, they are astonishingly like them.

Now let us connect with this the fact that the great majority of these men have been baptised into the threefold Name, and have been educated, however imperfectly, in the elements of Christian truth and conduct. Surely we must hold that the grace of God may come to men through the atmosphere of common life as well as individually. We know that, however much they may have lost, they have kept the Christian faith in God and in the life to come, and at least a rudimentary belief in prayer. We know that they have a deep and true reverence for Jesus Christ, and respect those who consistently follow Him. We have seen that in their very revolt against the Church they use Christian standards of judgment. Surely it is quite arbitrary in view of this to deny the influence of Christ in the virtues which they show.

But over and above these direct Christian influences there is a deeper and more subtle influence still. No matter how disinherited a man may be, he can hardly wholly lose the inheritance which comes to him from living in a land in which the Christian faith has been taught and practised for many centuries. No one can have much to do with the men without realising that by far the most powerful humanising and moralising influence in their lives is their homes. The intense love of home in the soldier is one of the most

striking and moving things about him. Nor is this confined to the comfortable and well-to-do classes. The fact has its own pathos that the home in the slum seems to be as dear as the home in the suburb or castle. But the home is the product of many centuries of Christian influence, even when it has forgotten its origin. It depends on Christian ideals of love and faithfulness between the sexes. How often we have seen individuals grow naturally more Christian as they develop homes! Therefore Christ is speaking to men to-day not only through the Churches, but through human affections and loyalties which He has made possible.

There is here, surely, an irresistible cumulative case against the endeavour to explain the great virtues of which we are thinking by saying that they are due simply to the stress of common danger and suffering acting upon human nature and begetting group-loyalties and virtues. The qualities in question are far too deep and spontaneous and unconscious to be the product of a few years of war. No one would deny the place that these conditions have had in eliciting and revealing these qualities. But they must have been there long before, these deep fountains of kindness, unselfishness, humility, generosity and cheerful self-sacrifice. The war has broken the ice and set the waters free.

Everyone must judge for himself. It is like the recognition of a family resemblance. We look at someone, watch his unconscious movements and gestures, listen to his voice, and note his expression. Then we say "Surely he belongs to the family."

We inquire into his birth and his history. Gradually the whole romance and tragedy come out, the story of the emigrant or the disinherited son. The family likeness and the story cohere, and compel conviction. So we say of these great qualities in our brethren, somewhere or somehow they derived them from the Son of God. There is deep meaning and pathos in the testimony of a well-known preacher that never did he get such close attention from the men as when he spoke to them of the Christ Who had been with them all along, and Who, although they knew it not, had helped them through. One of the best-known religious poems of the war is that which strikes this note.

And all the while in street or land or byway—  
In country land or city street, or byway—  
You walked among us, and we did not see.  
Your feet were bleeding as You walked our pavements,  
How did we miss Your footprints on our pavements,  
Can there be other folk as blind as we ?

You helped us pass the jest along the trenches,  
When in cold blood we waited in the trenches,  
You touched its ribaldry and made it fine,  
You stood beside us in our pain and weakness.  
We're glad to think You understood our weakness—  
Somehow it seems to help us not to whine.

The recognition of this past help carries the speaker on to the closing appeal :

Though we forgot You—You will not forget us—  
We feel so sure that You will not forget us—  
But stay with us until this dream is past.  
And so we ask for courage, strength and pardon.  
Especially, I think, we ask for pardon—  
And that You'll stand beside us at the last.

Now, if all this is true, and we believe it could, were there space, be much more fully substantiated, it is of capital importance both for the understanding of the present situation and for the retrieving of it. It will keep us in the active membership of the Church from undue discouragement as to the apparent failure of the Christian Church and from undue depreciation of the men, and help us to a greater candour in admitting our actual shortcomings. Something very great and noble has been achieved by all the Christian witness of the past, and we have to see to it to-day that that treasure is not thrown away, but secured. It will determine, too, our way of regarding and approaching the men. We shall not look upon them as failures from the religious point of view. We shall not go to them as to strangers, but as to brethren, and speak to them of Him Who has been with them all along, though they did not know it. We shall recognise the vast amount of misunderstanding that there is in the whole present alienation, and our own and our fathers' responsibility for very much in it.

But is not the interpretation of the situation which has been given too optimistic? What are we now to make of the great difficulty which has been alluded to above?

### *Purity.*

How can we claim that the moral outlook of the men is largely due to Christian inspiration, when at one vitally important point there seems on the part of many to be so large a divergence from the Christian standard? Taking a broad view of all the facts



before us, what we have seems to be not really an ignoring of or abandonment of the Christian ideal; rather it is a general recognition of it as the highest life, combined with a disbelief in its practicability for the ordinary man. If the ideal were really abandoned we should not have the general chivalry and respect which the men show to all women who come out to work for them whether as volunteers or professionally, nurses, hut-workers, W.A.A.C.'s, and so forth. Nor should we find the consistent Christian life held in such esteem. The men know well enough what is right tried by Christian standards. The real breakdown is not in the ideal but in the want of power to live up to it. Yielding to temptation of course in time must lead to the decay of the ideal, and, we may add, to the disintegration of home life. But this, as we have seen, has not as yet come to pass as a whole.

It is very difficult, in dealing with this whole question, to avoid two errors, that of exaggerating or minimising the evil. Taking the whole moral achievement of our armies in four years of war, we must surely feel that along a great and difficult range of virtues they have raised the standards of the whole nation. They have exalted devotion to duty, sacrifice, and brotherhood. They have shown the "shabbiness" of jealousy, party spirit, the greed of gain. The value of all this for the time of reconstruction is immeasurably great. We shall instinctively ask for many a day, "How does this or that life, or course of action, look in the light of the memory of the men who died on the fields of France?"

We have to bring the comparative failure at this



point into that noble context if we are to see it truly. But when we have done this, we have to see the evil as it is, if we are to be of any moral use at all to our nation. For what we have to grasp, however that grasp may wound us, is that here we have brought to light, in the glare of the war, a sin of the whole nation, and that its extermination is a matter of life or death.

Some good witnesses think that the war has not increased but only revealed the extent of the evil. The weight of the evidence tends, however, the other way, and, indeed, it would be surprising were it otherwise. It is notorious that all down through history this evil has dogged warfare like a shadow. The reason is plain. Where men are put in abnormal conditions there are bound to be abnormal reactions. The conditions of warfare, and especially of such hideous warfare as we have been living through, are abnormal. There is, first, the tremendous abnormality of the segregation of the sexes, the tedium of camp, the restraint and irritation of discipline, the awakening of the animal passions in battle, the reaction after intense emotional strain. Women, moreover, are deeply affected as well as men. Excitement and emotional sympathy working on them, under the conditions referred to later on, have had disastrous results.

The narratives of Arctic exploration tell how, under the prolonged strain of exposure to low temperatures, the interest in food becomes a constant obsession with even the most cultivated men. There is something pathological about it. So one cannot read the whole evidence before us on this matter without the con-

viction growing upon him that he is not only dealing with moral questions, but with pathology. What we have really to think most of is not the failure of so many of the men in this matter, but of the moral condition of the nation at home which has resulted, under such stress of temptation, in the moral weakness abroad. One may hope that when the abnormal condition is removed there will be a return to the normal in conduct. But what of that normal level tried by the Christian ideal?

We have to face here the same two great initial difficulties which face us everywhere, and against which the argument of this volume is mainly directed, a refusal to face the facts and an unbelieving despair of moral victory over them. We believe that to a large extent the former weakness is due to the latter. It is because we despair of victory that we refuse to face the enemy, and we despair of victory because we do not believe enough in God and the immediate availability of His triumphant grace. The time has surely come for a complete reversal of all this, and for a comprehensive and sustained campaign against the evil which is poisoning the very springs of our national life, inspired by the conviction that we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.

If any true and worthy reconstruction of the nation's life is to take place, if in the days to come moral health and family happiness are to be made secure, if the virility of the nation is to be adequate to the tasks before it, then this whole matter must be faced with a quite new sincerity and courage. What is to be done?

The first essential is that we view the problem truly

and wisely. A great many factors go to the production of the present state of affairs.

*Personal Factors.*

(1) *The unruly heart of man.*—A man's conduct cannot always be explained simply as the outcome of his circumstances and training. When all such influences have been taken account of, it remains necessary to take account of the man himself—the man who is quite capable of saying “I will do evil,” however favourable his circumstances may have been, or “I will not do evil,” however unfavourable his environment. (Merit and demerit are not hallucinations.) This is the root difficulty. None the less, a great many other forces may be recognised as having an appreciable influence in this connection.

(2) *Drink.*—Probably of the men who “go wrong” three-fourths do so for the first time when drink has made them reckless. The influence of this factor can hardly be overestimated. Among a sober people the problem of chastity would at once shrink to almost manageable proportions. At present this vice is simply floated in liquor.

(3) *Sheer ignorance* regarding the body and its functions. To an almost incredible extent young people now grow up in ignorance about their own bodies, and what knowledge they do acquire about the sexual facts is usually picked up in furtive and undesirable ways—ways which themselves militate against real purity, because they prevent young people from realising that all the facts about life as God ordained it are holy, happy, and beautiful. The

ethics of reproduction are too sacred for casual speech. That means that they demand very careful and special teaching. But many people hold them half indecent at best, and take refuge in a silence, which leaves the young in ignorance alike of what is holy, of what is unholy, and of the line of demarcation between the two. A grave weight of responsibility in this connection lies at the door of parents and teachers.

### *Social Conditions.*

(1) *Housing*.—Upbringing in circumstances which make real chastity difficult. It is plainly wrong that there should be less than three sleeping places in any family home—one for the parents, one for the girls, and one for the boys. And these conditions are not yet fulfilled for the majority of our people. Further, evil housing conditions mean no healthy social life within the home, so that girls and boys are driven to the streets for opportunities of meeting one another. This is a real factor in the situation. But we do not put so much stress upon it as many. It is questionable, at any rate, whether immorality is worse among those who are miserably housed than among those who live luxuriously. Both extremes tend to create this evil, and both extremes are brought about by our present social system.

The same evil of bad housing works mischief when the boys and girls grow up. Young men and young women will meet, either in houses or wholesome public resorts; or, failing these, in lanes, byways and corners, and unwholesome places of recreation. When only the latter are available, evil will usually come of it.



(2) *Sweating wages paid to girls.* It is notorious that many a young girl who would fain have remained pure has been driven into prostitution by the sheer force of starvation wages.

(3) *The living-in system.* It is still the fact that hundreds of men in shops are practically told that they must not marry. They are given board and lodging by their employers, and beyond that only a pittance.

(4) *All underpayment of men* whereby marriage is rendered difficult. Nature calls on men to marry young. But—though a reasonable period of waiting is perhaps morally strengthening and in other ways desirable and inevitable—economic factors often forbid marriage for years beyond that period.

(5) *The artificial social convention* which leads young men and young women to postpone marriage until they can “set up in some style.” In other words, the unhealthy reluctance of many to face the wholesome hardships of beginning married life on simple terms.

It will be seen how large a part economic causes play in this matter. The standards of purity, such as they were, in earlier times were maintained by two things, moral and religious teaching and tradition, and the outward restraints of convention, which put certain well-marked restraints upon freedom of social intercourse between the sexes. Women were recognised to be dependent on their men-folk, until marriage gave them a home of their own.

Now many of these conventions have been utterly swept away. The great economic changes of the past century have given some women a new freedom and



imposed upon others a new dependence on economic conditions. They have also created the housing problem. This destruction of the old restraints and conventions has thrown the whole stress of maintaining the standards of purity on teaching, tradition and religion, and these have been unable to stand the greatly increased strain. The situation calls loudly for reconsideration of our existing educational methods and an enrichment of our moral ideals. We must seek to impart a positive instead of a negative idea of purity, as something which is essential to true men and women alike, as children of the great Father, made to become like Him and to discover and reveal Him. We need, in order to supply the place of the conventional safeguards from without which have been so largely swept away, a new energy of moral life from within, and a self-discipline which can take the place of external pressure. We need a new chivalry, not only of men towards women, but of women towards men.

All this must be based on franker teaching as to the physical basis of sex life.

Church and State alike have failed to put before the young a positive ideal of the possible worth and beauty of sexual life, which would make the struggle to maintain chastity before marriage seem abundantly worth while. In connection with sexual matters, many of the young have heard nothing but grim warnings. They have never been helped to understand that if passion be held in leash, until true love opens a door for its just exercise, the result is a life in which all the bodily part of life is redeemed by its association with pure affection and its intimate relation to the

ennobling responsibilities of the family. Young men (as well as young women) nowadays throw away their chastity with little or no idea of what they are losing.

(6) Finally, the supreme cause of the evil is the absence in so many of any real faith in a spiritual power beyond themselves and in spiritual ends which make self-denial seem justified. Here, as elsewhere, we meet the contagion of the materialism of our time. Sensuality always involves a materialistic view of life. When men and women have ceased to believe in anything great beyond the visible present, when they are conscious no longer of any obligation to a Creator and Father, they turn naturally to the attempt to get the most out of material things—to having what is called “a good time.” And on these terms chastity will never long survive. But those who know themselves as the sons and daughters of God are conscious of an august voice which forbids the indulgence of the flesh to the detriment of the spirit. Not only do the pure in heart see God, but those who are in any measure aware of God are by the fact constrained to purity. The fundamental reason for our present moral condition is to be found in the state of religion among us.

If in any measure the foregoing analysis of the situation is true, then just to that extent the remedy has been indicated.

There may be those who will be content to say, “If the lack of true religion is the fundamental cause of the prevalence of vice, then the one thing to do is to secure that true religion be more faithfully taught and preached.” And we agree that that is the primary

and most pressing duty to which the facts ought to summon us.

But true religion will always express itself in attempts to remove all that makes virtue difficult. It can, indeed, never be made easy, but it is a wicked thing when a nation is content to allow removable abuses to remain which make for the increase of vice. There is no one remedy for this particular social evil. The amount of irregular sexual indulgence in a nation may always be truly regarded as a measure of the general amount of social ill-health in that nation. We shall only conquer this evil as we advance to a truer social life in all respects.

We shall do well also to realise that we all share in some measure in the guilt of the nation's impurity. That impurity is in large measure merely the outcome of the continuance in our midst of unhealthy but removable social conditions. And we have all been fatally complacent about social evils.

We can do no more than indicate some of the necessary steps towards national purity.

(1) We must avoid all fallacious methods of dealing with this evil, such as regulation, registration, etc. Continental experience has abundantly proved that there is no door of deliverance to be found in that direction. The thorough and able investigation of Mr. Abraham Flexner contained in his book, "Prostitution in Europe," amounts really to a demonstration of that fact. Whatever language may be employed about it, regulation amounts to a compact with vice, and is Society's tacit assent to laxity. Nor is any good to be expected from imposing legal penalties on the

prostitute. That really unchristian method has been already largely tried, and without any success.

(2) It is essential that we should get the law right as between men and women. So long as the law discriminates unfairly against women in connection with solicitation and divorce and the conveying of venereal disease, we fight for purity upon an unsound basis. What is wanted is that the nation should declare itself by statute on this matter, and, at least officially, occupy a really sound position.

(3) A further method of doing this would be to reinforce Society's powers against all exploitation of vice. Probably we need new laws, but certainly we need a new vigilance in enforcing the existing laws. Indecent publications and amusements still assail the youth of the country, and, in spite of the law, brothels are still common. They should be exterminated. We may fairly claim that the fight against the White Slave traffic and such measure of success as it had (which was very real) were the most bracing influences on moral public opinion before the war.

(4) We should do well to put an end for ever to mutual recriminations between the sexes. In this matter the dishonours are pretty equally divided. When either men or women try to throw the weight of guilt upon the other sex a situation is created that is fatal to that generous co-operation in reform by which alone victory can be secured.

(5) We must get on with housing reform, remembering that it is not a mere fad of sanitary specialists, but a matter which involves the very souls of our people.



(6) Similarly, we must become unanimous in insisting that an end be set to all sweating wages. Cost what it may, the country must see to it that every woman worker has a really living wage, and that marriage in the prime of youth is made economically possible. We must secure a sound economic basis for the family. As for the individual, "Get the young married" is a good motto for those who work for social purity.

(7) No less essential is it that we deal adequately with the drink problem. This question has long been over-ripe, and the social evil demands its settlement without longer delay. We cannot be pure so long as we remain drunken.

(8) As a positive measure, it is equally essential that we resolve to provide athletic facilities for the young, and abundant opportunities for healthy and free social intercourse for young men and women.

(9) A new policy in moral education. This is perhaps the very heart of the whole matter. It will, no doubt, be found to be a vastly complex and difficult matter, which calls for a great deal of careful study and patient experiment. But we think all who have come into close contact with young boys and girls would agree that nothing is more important. We need to secure for them careful and wisely graduated education :—

- (a) In the truth about the human body generally and the conditions of its health.
- (b) In the facts about our sexual nature.
- (c) In sex ideals.
- (d) In the conditions on which purity can be maintained.



All will agree that this is a matter primarily for parents, and, many would say, especially for mothers. But it is, probably, also one in which school teachers, doctors, club workers, Boys' Brigade officers, Boy Scout officers, Girl Guide officers, and ministers may usefully co-operate.

(10) We have left to the last what is the greatest need of all. As a nation we need to have proclaimed and realised among us the whole spiritual truth as to sexual life. We need to have it declared that sex activity is an integral part of ordinary human life as it was ordained by God, and that therefore it is capable of being beautiful and holy; that, like all physical life, it was meant to have a certain sacramental value. Through it, therefore, spiritual purposes were meant to be realised and spiritual thoughts were meant to find expression. It must be insisted that only love justifies physical intimacy, that real love demands permanent unions for those who become one flesh, and that the achievement of such unions is an end so great that it justifies and rewards all the efforts and struggles which chastity before marriage will call for.

We must carry the matter further still. We are children of God, and therefore sharers of His nature. This kinship in God is what makes man human. Therefore the prevailing moral scepticism of our time as to the possibility of purity for a man must be overthrown and cast out. The greatest witness to the prevailing laxity is the condoning sentiment constantly expressed, "That sort of thing has always happened and always will happen. It is only natural. It is human nature, and you cannot change human

nature." No more definite apostasy from every spiritual view of man can be conceived. It involves the total denial of Christ and God. We have to bear witness constantly that no sexual sin is inevitable, that Society may be pure and will be pure as soon as it decides to be so. Sexual sin is not "natural" for a human being. It is monstrously unnatural if man be more than an animal.

Our supreme need is the recovery of a living sense of God. As we discover Him we shall gain that confident and expectant attitude of spirit in which alone the power of vice can be utterly broken. Man's destiny is to be pure. God's will for Him is that he should be pure. Only those who know this will count for much in the struggle.

It is the main duty of the Church to proclaim this with new certainty and power. It is the main duty of Christian minds to proclaim it through literature, art, policy and life. There would then be created an atmosphere in which men would feel that virtue was expected of them, and in which they would produce virtue. So long as Society is sceptical about virtue, men will produce vice.

But if the Christian Church is to expect virtue it must do something more than denounce vice and be scandalised at sinners. It must inspire the world with an ideal of the nobility and sacredness of married life in all its range, physical, mental and spiritual. It must exalt true love and pure passion to that position which is theirs of right, in the great sacrament of human life.

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOCIAL EVANGELISM

*The Social Mission of the Church.* The Church must show its faith in the value of human personality by its works. All Christian forces must unite to face the social problem—not with the object of winning men, but out of the spirit of spontaneous love exhibited by Jesus.

*Interdenominationalism.*

Is this union of Churches possible? There are two obstacles.

1. Principle. No Church wishes to compromise the truth it stands for. The undenominational principle has great limitations, and is being succeeded by interdenominationalism, which recognises (1) the need for co-operation, (2) the peculiar contribution of each denomination.

2. Practice. The experience of past interdenominational action is encouraging—e.g., Foreign Missions, the Student Christian Movement.

*The Work of the Y.M.C.A. with the Armies.* Hut work has been a mission of friendship. Under the emergency all denominations have united. The Y.M.C.A. after-the-war scheme.

*The Need for a Union of Forces.* The great need is a mission of good-will and reconciliation. The co-operation of the Churches in such work will reveal their underlying unity. The Churches, the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., and the Student Christian Movement have each their past experience of social evangelism. Co-operation is necessary for all parties alike if they are to meet the situation.

It depends largely on the Churches whether a great common advance can be made.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOCIAL EVANGELISM

WE have seen that by virtue of its law of love and its ideal of the Kingdom of God the Christian Church is bound to labour for the transformation of the existing order of society, which to a large extent is based on self-interest and the pursuit of wealth, into one which shall have as its supreme principle the value of human beings, love leading to association. This is, in truth, the only alternative to acquiescence in a social order which puts a premium on practical materialism. But it follows from this that, pending the transformation, the Church ought to do all in its power to prepare the way for such transformation.

#### *The Social Mission of the Church.*

The Church has a higher standard than the State, and must live up to that standard. Now in the past it has moralised the State, not only by precept but by example. Thus, it has led the way in the education of the masses, in the alleviation of the sufferings of slaves and in their manumission, in the relief of poverty and in many other ways.

We see the same principle everywhere at work to-day in the Foreign Mission field. Great educational institutions, trading and agricultural companies, orphanages, enterprises in relief of famine, disease, and poverty have sprung up all over the world in the wake of the Christian mission. They are, one and all, the endeavour to work out in social forms the Christian valuation of human personality—in other words, the law of love. They are in very many cases the endeavour to make good to men and women the things of which the unchristian or imperfectly Christian character of the State has deprived them. In many cases, also, alike in its remoter past and in the world of to-day, the State has recognised the force of this testimony and has taken over from the Church the work in which it had led the way.

This is the basis of the “social work” of the Church to-day. It cannot, if it is to be true to the Spirit of Jesus, be content with mere protest against the wrongs wrought on humanity by an unchristian order of society. It must grapple with them and show its faith by its works. It must set forth the Kingdom of God not only by precept but by example.

There has been in this matter a great awakening within the Churches during the past century. A vast amount of social work is being carried on to-day, in part by Church organisations, and in part by the organised effort of Christians acting outside the Churches.

But in spite of all this, the work still to be done is far beyond the reach of all these enterprises taken together. It is estimated that probably 29 per cent.



of our population still live beneath the line of wages on which a physically wholesome life is possible. We cannot explain this by ascribing it, solely, to the native shiftlessness and self-indulgence of the depressed classes. It is to a very large extent the necessary consequence of a system founded mainly on self-interest.

The time has surely come for all the Christian forces in the country to grapple together with the problem as a whole. No one can say that the socially disinherited classes of our country have failed her in her hour of need! They have borne their part in one great fellowship with the youth of the whole land. Where should we all have been to-day if these disinherited men had not stood in the breach? If ever the young manhood of a nation deserved the best that a nation should give, it is the manhood that will soon be returning from its terrible ordeal. They are the men of the Salient, of the Ridges, of the Somme! They have a double right to the best that we can do for them, not as a matter of "charity," but as a debt of spiritual honour, and so have the fatherless children of vast numbers who will return no more.

But the social mission of the Church is not confined alone to that large section of the youth of the country, which is beneath the poverty line. It should come as a message of good-will to all, giving to some opportunities of social service, to others educational facilities, wholesome social relationships, invigorating recreation, friendships, and means, generally, of better life in town and country than are open to youth generally to-day under existing conditions. We are all awaken-

ing more and more to the fact that the "trinity of evil" in our country, Impurity, Drink, and Gambling, cannot be overthrown by repressive agencies alone, however necessary and right these may be. The vital impulses, which are there found in a perverted form, must find wholesome and honourable channels, and it is part of the business of the Christian Church to pioneer the way for the State by discovering and providing these channels.

We shall never get the whole matter on the right basis until we have realised this. But if we do realise it, and act upon it in the true spirit of Christian love, we shall have a magnificent opportunity for preaching Christ in action, and for sweeping away the dense fog which obsesses their minds with reference to what the Christian life really is, and as to what Christ really stands for in the life of men.

But, even here, we must avoid the subtle temptation of trying to commend the Christian Church by works of beneficence. The social work of the Church in the coming generation must not come to the youth of the nation in the first instance as if it were devised for the purpose of winning them back to the membership of the Churches, but on the simple ground of human brotherhood and the coming of the Kingdom of God. Its real inspiration must be the spirit of Jesus, the spirit in which He healed the sick and raised the dead. It has often been said of these deeds of His that He wrought them to prove His divine mission. But that surely is not the spirit of the Gospel narratives. It has been said that no real poet ever writes verses to show that

he can write them. If he tries to do so he shows himself by so much the less a true poet. He writes because he cannot help it. So Jesus works His great deeds because He cannot help it, because the sheer faith and love and hope in Him well out in deeds of life and blessing. His deeds of life are actualisations of the Kingdom of God which He brought to men. Such must be the spirit of the Church if it is to reveal its Lord. This is the kind of spontaneous, inevitable, unconscious testimony that the Church must show to-day if the breath of the Spirit is to dispel the great mist that lies on the minds of men.

*Interdenominationalism.*

But is such a union of all the organised Christian Churches in the country possible? It is surely infinitely desirable. Not only would the economy of personal force and material means secured thereby be great, but the moral influence would be even greater.

What hinders? There are two great obstacles, one of principle and one of practice.

(I) The difficulty of principle must be dealt with first. What keeps the Churches apart is the dread of compromising the truth which each believes it stands for, and which is consecrated for it by innumerable memories and loyalties. We did not make our "unhappy divisions"; we inherit them. We, nearly all, deplore them. Yet loyalty to God and to our fathers seems to demand a course of action for each that implies the separation of all.

But within the past century there has been an ever-increasing tendency towards co-operation in certain

of the wider aims of the Kingdom of God. For a long time such co-operation was realised only on the undenominational basis. The principle here was that the things on which all Christians agreed were the only matters of primary importance, the distinctive tenets being secondary. Parties to such co-operation came in on the understanding that they waived their right to mention such points of difference, or to have their denominational point of view expressed, under any such co-operation.

In so far as this was a step towards fuller unity, it was a great advance on former exclusive action, and has fully justified its faith by its works. The achievement of the British and Foreign Bible Society is an illustrious example of what may be done on such an understanding, and many other instances might be given. But the undenominational principle has certain obvious limitations. A friendship which has as its very condition the understanding that the friends shall keep silence on matters on which they feel deeply is obviously very far short of being a satisfactory friendship. The agreement that this veto shall be removed may have its dangers, but it is at least an adventure after what all would feel to be something nobler. It is in this light that we must regard the further step towards Christian unity which is represented by Interdenominationalism. The question is sometimes asked whether modern movements towards unity of the Churches spring from a deepening or a shallowing of religious conviction. It is, at least, certain that the Interdenominationalist movement originated with those in the Churches who are most



deeply interested in Foreign Missions, a fact which should be a sufficient guarantee of the motives impelling it. The general idea of Interdenominationalism is (1) that the work of the Kingdom of God in our day is so great and urgent that all genuinely Christian forces should co-operate ; (2) that each of the denominations has in it something vital and peculiar to itself which it cannot wholly abandon without denying its history and compromising something peculiar to its life, and that, therefore, it should not be asked to abnegate its peculiar standpoint as an initial condition of co-operation. It is rather invited to make its own contribution to the common service of the Kingdom of God. What that contribution may ultimately be is left to the future to determine. Meantime, freedom of expression is accorded to all parties consenting to the concordat, and labouring together for Christ's Kingdom.

It will be seen that this is a much bolder and, many will believe, a much more hazardous form of Christian co-operation than that of undenominationalism. It has obviously, also, many advantages. The undenominationalist principle is under the great disadvantage that its preliminary condition is that each consenting denomination must be silent as to its own distinctive individuality and history, and the special lessons which have been taught it by the Spirit and Providence of God. In so far as these are true lessons, the union so attained must be an impoverished one at the best ; there can be no full exchange of heart and mind and experience, as to the things that concern the Kingdom of God.



There is a parallel in the life of the nations. There is a great difference between a cosmopolitan and an internationalist ideal. The cosmopolitan regards national feeling as pure prejudice and looks forward to a world-commonwealth in which all national distinctions and patriotisms shall have passed away. The internationalist believes that these add to the riches of human life, and that they must be preserved, but spiritualised in a higher unity. Akin to this difference is the difference between the undenominationalist and the Interdenominationalist ideal of the future of the Christian Church.

It can hardly be doubted that of the two the latter is the bolder and richer in aim. Nor can there be any question of sacrifice of principle or disloyalty to truth or to the past on such a basis.

(II) The real difficulty is one of practice. Such a social programme as has been indicated in the later part of this chapter may be carried out by the Churches on the basis of the Interdenominationalist principle. Is it really practicable? We must here refer briefly to the practical experience of the last twenty-five years.

We may fairly claim that so far as it has gone, the practice of the Interdenominationalist principle has been surprisingly and uniformly successful. The dangers of Interdenominationalism are obvious to every practical mind. Every such concordat can be wrecked by fanaticism and intolerance. The constitutional checks secured by undenominationalism are removed, and each party to the agreement has liberty to press its own point of view, subject only to a like liberty on the part of all the others. The whole question is whether the

spiritual and rational checks will be found sufficient to take the place of the constitutional. It is most encouraging to record that in practice this has been hitherto found to be uniformly the case, where the experiment has been fairly tried. It has been discovered that when liberty is given to an individual or a denomination to state its point of view that liberty is not abused. The desire to carry through the common work of the Kingdom of God for which the different parties have come together, the common spirit of love and fairness, the sense that unity is nobler than division, and that unity must not be lightly thrown away, all these influences operate like a climate, and restrain the controversial spirit. On the other hand, it greatly aids the development of a spirit of tolerance of unfamiliar and unwelcome views when the hearer knows that he has the constitutional right to a like liberty of prophesying. The very difficulty and tension of the whole situation have been found to induce the spirit of prayer. Christian men have been driven back upon God.

All who have had to do with such interdenominational enterprises will recognise the truth of what has been said above. The experiment, as has been said, was first tried in connection with the work of Foreign Missions. Face to face with the gigantic task of the evangelisation of the world, the various Churches have here reached their unity as never before. The Edinburgh World Conference, and the various joint enterprises that have followed upon it, have all been Interdenominational. So have been the meetings of the Committee on Faith and Order, and

the present enquiry is another instance of the principle.

The oldest and most complete test, however, is found in the history of the Student Christian Movement, which was itself primarily a missionary organisation. For many years past the Student Camps at Conishead, Baslow, and Swanwick have been the places in England above all others where Churchmen, Non-conformists, and Presbyterians have been able to meet in fellowship on the Interdenominational footing and to share in the wider and fuller life that comes from such a fellowship. It is safe to say that no one in that movement wishes to go back to the undenominationalist principle, and that everyone there recognises that the Interdenominationalist standpoint is a new step in advance along the road from separate action towards a fuller union with all who hold the faith of Christ.

Study, then, of the whole situation leads us first to the necessity of some great advance of all the Churches in the country on the lines of social Christianity, and suggests the Interdenominationalist principle as the true basis for such an enterprise. But how can these Churches find a common platform for such a propaganda of Christian action? So obvious is the desirability of such a common platform that we may say that if it did not exist it would be necessary to invent one. But here, too, a singular conjunction of circumstances seems to have marked out the natural way of advance.

*The Work of the Y.M.C.A. with the Armies.*

There is no better picture of what such Interdenominational social evangelism can do than is found

in what is known as "hut-work" with the armies. Whether undertaken by the Churches or by the Y.M.C.A., with which, by virtue of its initiation of the method and the wide scope of its organisation, this work is mainly associated in the public mind, it deserves our heartiest gratitude. We have here, if we have the eyes to see it, a great open road through the heart of our problem, the road of disinterested human service in the Name of Jesus. The men were in need, they were often hungry, and weary, and ready, if ever men were, for friendship, and the whole aim of this hut-work was simply to help them. No question was asked as to religion, or even as to character; all were made welcome to everything in the Name of the Son of Man. Attendance at the religious services in the huts was voluntary, but the men came, often in great numbers. The good that this mission of friendship has done in the prevention of evil amid the appalling temptations of life at the great bases in particular can never be estimated. It is not too much to say that the huts have been the most popular institutions in the Army. No happier inspiration of practical Christian genius has been seen in these years of war.

What is of crucial importance for our immediate purpose is the fact that under the emergency conditions of the war it has been found possible to unite men and women of all the Churches in the field and base work of the Y.M.C.A. on an Interdenominational basis. Parade services of all types, Anglican, Protestant, and Roman, were held in the huts, and chaplains of all creeds were welcomed there to meet and talk with their men. Experiments were made,



with the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities, in a joint form of service for the Sunday evening meetings. Emergency conditions created this concordat. The old barriers were submerged by the flood of human sympathy with and gratitude to our men. The thought irresistibly suggests itself, is not the same need there, when the men are home again? Are we all going to forget not only the men who survive, but the boys and girls of the myriads who will never come home,—fatherless children, many of them hungry, disinherited, tempted, children of the mean street and the city slum? If the need is there, why should this mission of pure friendship in the Name of Jesus cease? Why should it not be a permanent thing in the life of the nation? Why should not the emergency agreement of the Churches be wrought out by Christian statesmanship into a solid and enduring alliance for social evangelism?

There has been some hesitation on the part of many in the Churches regarding the after-the-war scheme of the Y.M.C.A. in view of the fact that its original basis, like that of all the co-operative Christian movements of the period in which it was founded, was undenominational. But the practical emergencies of its war work, the urgent necessities of the men in the field, and the need for enlisting the widest possible support at home in order to meet these necessities, have led it from the opening of the war, as we have seen, to the practical acceptance of the Interdenominationalist basis. It has drawn workers from every form of Christian religious communion, it has applied for support from all the Churches, and its huts have been used for the services of all.



The explicit recognition of the principle which has since followed was only a natural development from courses which were obviously demanded by the spiritual necessities of the situation.

The National Council of the Y.M.C.A. has undertaken the carrying through of a scheme for covering the whole country with institutes akin in principle to the huts which it has planted in the camps, and in view of this has invited the co-operation of the Churches.

### *The Need for a Union of Forces.*

We seem to have here, therefore, the elements of what we have seen to be an essential part of the solution of the problem which it is the purpose of this volume to set before the Christian mind of the country. We must not be blind to the difficulties which lie in the way of the successful prosecution of such a scheme. "The Interdenominational principle," it may be argued, "is now to be put to a much more drastic test than it has yet experienced. What has proved practicable in the mission field, in committees of various kinds, and in a special class such as the Student Christian Movement represents, may not prove workable in the carrying through of a Christian social programme in the cities, towns, and rural districts of England and Scotland, with their inveterate ecclesiastical differences. The moral and spiritual checks on the abuse of liberty may not prove strong enough to preserve the unity of the spirit." It is true. The situation is in the making, and it demands men and women of goodwill. It requires the help of the readers of this volume.

It calls for foresight and statesmanship. It demands that the Churches shall awaken to the facts and face them in the spirit of love to men and faith in God. If they have been able to unite as they have done in support of the work of the huts under the emergency of war, there seems no reason in principle why they should not continue to do so in time of peace. If the enterprise has its dangers the opportunity is surely immense. We have seen how large a part sheer misunderstandings play in the present situation. On our part, as we have seen, we have misunderstood the men. We believe that they also misunderstand us, and what is of deeper moment, that they misunderstand Christianity. Surely what is needed at this time of all times is a mission of sheer good-will and reconciliation, of deeds rather than words of the whole Christian Church to the whole nation.

If this enterprise can be put on its right basis, divested of every appearance of charity, inspired by the spirit of gratitude, justice, and fraternity, and carried through as a united work of all the Churches working harmoniously together for the common good, it might of itself go very far towards retrieving the whole situation. Their co-operation in such a work would reveal the unity, also, that underlies the differences which have given so much reason for misunderstanding, while the opposite course would, it must be equally clear, be a new disaster.

Social Evangelism is, of course, no novelty in the land. It has been steadily winning its way in the country ever since the middle of last century at least, and in many places has achieved remarkable results.

The various organisations for this purpose which have been developed out of the life of the Churches for this purpose have achieved remarkable results, and leavened the whole life of the Church with new thoughts and given it a new conscience. With them lies the credit of pioneering in this new field. They have of late, also, been showing a new sense that they had all one great problem in common, and have been coming together in conference about it. They have also accumulated a great amount of experience, which will be invaluable in future grappling with the problem. But they would be the first to recognise that as yet its solution is far beyond them, all taken together, and that for grappling with the whole situation throughout the land, not only in the great industrial centres but throughout the rural districts, they, who have endured so long a battle, need powerful reinforcement. On the other hand, the Y.M.C.A. needs all the help that their experience can give, and it needs above all human things the leaders that only the life of the Churches can supply. In its appeal for public support, also, the steady moral support of the Churches will be no light assistance.

That the Y.M.C.A. also will have great gifts to bring into such an alliance we have already made clear. The national good-will which it has deservedly won, its human touch with the men of the armies, its experience of them, and the Interdenominational platform which it hopes to provide, ought to make it a reinforcement of the utmost value, one which may make all the difference in the world at such a decisive hour of spiritual destiny as that in which we are living.

The difficulties of such an enterprise are obvious. We shall gain nothing by underestimating them, for they lie in the very nature of the situation. The forces that ought to co-operate for the Kingdom of God may conceivably compete for their own distinction. The question is thus first of all, a profoundly spiritual one. But the other problems are problems of the highest Christian statesmanship. They can only be solved by the best minds on either side coming into common council and working together for one great common end, the victory of the Kingdom of God. Each party needs the other, and this common necessity demands some institutional expression. If we set the aims of such co-operation too low, and if we underestimate the difficulties, we shall fail to realise the need for unity, and the core of the whole matter is that it will take all and more than all the existing forces in the field, the Churches, and their social organisations, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., and the Student Christian Movement, fully to meet the situation. The Y.M.C.A. on its part, while it will start well, can only win and secure a permanent and growing position in the life of the nation by fully recognising the place and worth of existing organisations, and by identifying itself with the deepest and broadest and most progressive and Christian life of its time. In the long run, the fortunes of any great spiritual movement that has blessed mankind have depended on the type of men and women it has been able to attract to its leadership. This again depends on the spiritual ideals which inspire it. If these are noble and spiritual, and if the organisation shows itself consistently willing to lay its life



down for them, willing to bear its cross for them and even willing to break up and die rather than be faithless to them for any wealth or for any fame, and if its existing leadership shows practical wisdom in the methods which it uses for realising those ideals, the best kind of leaders are drawn to it by a kind of spiritual selection. They are sent by the Spirit of God, and they cannot keep away. The needed support comes also, and it comes willingly, when men see noble ideals wisely wrought out and faithfully administered in the service of God and man.

It is clear that for this end the Y.M.C.A. needs the steady alliance and sympathy of the Churches in England and in Scotland alike. Making every abatement for the temporary separation of great masses of youth from their communions, they command vast latent as well as active sources of power. There is no future for any Christian organisation that does not draw its life from the Christian Church. This is recognised by the Y.M.C.A. throughout the world, and it is on that basis that its present scheme is founded.

There is surely no Christian reason in the nature of things why the projected institutes, therefore, should be regarded as rival and competing agencies in those cities and towns and districts into which they may come. Rather should they be welcomed as a new ally in the work which is at present too great to be accomplished by all the agencies taken together. What is necessary is, clearly, that the authorities in each Church should get into touch and counsel with the Y.M.C.A., work out with it the terms of a fair understanding, and



when such understanding has been reached, should give its enterprise their steady support.<sup>1</sup> We confine ourselves here to general principles.

The conditions seem to require that the Y.M.C.A. should retain its own freedom and individuality. If it is to reach and influence the masses of the men in their present temper this seems essential. Its function is to be that of an exploring, pioneering body moving on in advance of the main body of the Christian army, while working in close touch with it.

It is clear that the other two parties to the suggested alliance, the Y.W.C.A. and the Student Christian Movement, are also essential to its full success. There is one problem common to all alike, the problem of the winning of the youth of the country for the Kingdom of God. It is not for us to suggest terms of co-operation. The practical statesmanship of all may be trusted to work out their own methods. But clearly the closer the touch they are able to maintain with each other, the more each party is able to see its own work in the light of the common situation, the better will it be for the common advance.

Can such a great common advance now be undertaken and carried through? This seems to depend very largely on the Churches. The situation is very much what they may choose to make it. They can, if they so choose, do nothing, viewing any forward movement in a purely critical spirit.

The obvious danger in such a case is that there will be

<sup>1</sup>Since these words were written notable progress has been made in this direction both in England and Scotland. See Appendix II.

endless local wranglings and unedifying incidents, which in the end of the day will work untold mischief, aggravating still further the state of matters brought before us in the evidence, widening the gulf which already exists between the youth of the country and the Churches. But they may take the lead in a great forward movement, using their vast latent resources to impel, to steady, and to regulate the general advance. They can make themselves the centre and rallying point for all men and women of good-will in a true crusade of the Kingdom of God. Instead of keeping aloof from one another, and pursuing many different plans of individual and sectional effort, they can take counsel together, and without the smallest surrender of anything distinctive they can co-operate together in the framing and the carrying through of a common plan.

They can meet this great uprising of all the powers of evil with such an uprising of all the forces of good as shall overwhelm them, and begin a new epoch, a true "day of the Son of Man."

# ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MESSAGE OF EVANGELISM

Evangelism is here used of the propaganda of the Kingdom of God. The problem of the adult is what is now before us.

The life of the Churches should be the greatest evangelising force, but something can be done by the evangelism of preaching and action. What should be the message ?

1. The ignorance of the men is a determining factor. The evangelist must retrieve the failures of religious education. Evangelistic work cannot have permanent effect where misunderstanding of Christ and Christianity prevails. Before the men can know what salvation is, they must see Jesus.

2. The men's minds must be studied.

Further points.

1. Belief in Almighty God.

2. Christ the Liberator from the power of evil.

3. The Kingdom of God.

There is a deep sense of the sin of society, but no knowledge how to set it right. The first evangelism set forth the idea of a Divine society. The Gospel of the Kingdom and of personal salvation go together.

4. The interest of the men in the missionary aspect of Christianity is encouraging here ; also the fact that the idea of the Kingdom has appealed to youth in the Student Christian Movement.

The world's need is Theocracy. Christ's doctrine of God is the one basis on which the Kingdom is practicable.

We need to appeal to the heroic in man.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MESSAGE OF EVANGELISM

THE immediate task before the Church in the coming years is nothing less than the winning of the great majority of the youth of the nation to faith in God through Jesus Christ and conscious dedication to His Kingdom.

If we do not face this whole task, for what do we exist in the land? If, as at present organised, or rather disorganised, we cannot face this whole problem, we must set our house in order that we may. If we have not the vitality for so great an enterprise, we must get it from the Lord and Giver of Life.

The task falls into two main parts—education and evangelism. We must assuredly reconsider our whole method of education, but it is too late now to reach the millions in camp or factory through the schools. We have to face the problem of the adolescent and the adult, and consider how they may be won for the Kingdom of God. Evangelism is commonly associated with special services in churches and halls or the streets. But we shall use it in the wider sense. We mean by it the propaganda of the Kingdom of God among the young manhood of the nation. Such

evangelism ought to be the affair of the whole Church. We must wholly dismiss from our minds the idea that this work can be fully met by setting apart a professional class to do it. The life of the Churches ought to be by far the greatest evangelising force in the country. We shall never really meet the necessities of the case until the Churches are roused up to realise this. Nor can we solve the problem by simple preaching, or by "buttonholing" men, invaluable as faithful teaching and wisely exerted personal influence are. The primary necessity is that the Church throughout all the range of its activities should learn itself to seek first the noblest of all ideals, "the Kingdom of God," and draw to itself as a spiritual home all generous, humble, and earnest hearts. Christian witness is cumulative. If the life of the community be warm, consistent, heroic, and full of the spirit of prayer and brotherhood, the task of the evangelist is immeasurably simplified.

Moreover, if the preaching of the Divine message is always essential to the founding of the community itself and is what finally wins men and women, it is the community which keeps them and nurtures them. Reference will be made later to the want of knowledge of the men as one great cause of the instability of the results of revival. But surely another is too often found in the want of grip and vitality in the fellowship into which they come. The "natural heart of man" is no doubt a great and formidable factor which we have to reckon with in all evangelistic endeavours. But it is the main idea of this chapter that much of our weakness in this matter is really due to faults in our



methods that are removable, and to coldness in our own life that may be retrieved.

But pending that new birth of life in the Church something may be done by true evangelism of preaching and action to bring men into the Kingdom of God. This, indeed, has been, and is at this moment being, done in the camps by a great number of chaplains, evangelists, and hut workers generally. We possess in our evidence a considerable number of valuable memoranda from evangelists in the service of the Y.M.C.A. These corroborate in a striking way the general testimony of the other papers, (1) as to the very great majority of the men being outside the communion of the Churches, (2) as to the great amount of confusion and ignorance regarding the Christian message and ideal, (3) as to their readiness to hear a straight and living message.

As the result of special services of this kind in the camps during the four years of war, for instance, the "War Roll" pledge of dedication to the service of Christ and His Kingdom has been signed by nearly 350,000 men. But this work stands by itself: it has been done under the stress of abnormal conditions which, with the cessation of actual fighting, have been removed. Instead of such past conditions, we have already to deal with men in the condition of reaction which must follow the excitement of war.

What should be the message of evangelism in the coming years? What is said in answer to this question must be taken in supplement to the Chapter on the Vitalising of Doctrine.<sup>1</sup> There we were considering the

<sup>1</sup> Part II, Ch. II.

problem of how to meet the difficulties of the more thoughtful class. Here we are concerned with the whole. We shall confine ourselves strictly to certain thoughts which are inevitably suggested by the evidence in our hands.

(1) Everything, then, here must be determined by the startling ignorance of the men as to what the Christian Gospel and the Christian life really are. We must reiterate that if we thought of Christianity as these men think of it, we should not be Christians. This by no means accounts for everything, but it is a large factor in the situation. The evangelist who allows himself to forget it will assuredly fail with a large proportion of his audience. They may listen closely to him, they may even show themselves impressed by what he says, but they will not really understand. His mind and theirs will not really meet.

No doubt many will say that we are making far too complex a situation that is simple enough, that we have only to bring home conviction of sin to men and then preach Christ to them, and get them to decide for Him. The task of instruction follows.

There is, fortunately, a measure of truth in this. The power of the simplest methods to effect lasting changes in many is constantly witnessed, when they are used by men of real faith and zeal, and we are apt to think that nothing more is needful. But we forget the vastly greater numbers who go away unmoved, and the too frequent lapsing away of converts who have given every sign of being regenerated men. We ascribe all this too indiscriminately to the natural heart of man, and forget that much of it may well be due to causes that are removable.

Beneath the familiar language about "bringing home conviction of sin to men" and "the preaching of Christ" there lurk great ambiguities. We have to deal with men who, as we have seen, are many of them in "a condition of impenetrable fog" as to what "Christ" stands for or means. They do not associate many of the great virtues which they admire and practise with His Name. This idea of Him, we are told, is derived not mainly from the Gospels, but "from hymns of a weak and washy type." "Most of them do not think about Him at all."

Now we have to grasp the fact firmly that so long as there is this vague and distorted picture of Him in the men's minds, so long as they think of discipleship mainly as the following of a set of negative commandments, so long as there is no definite moral content in their thoughts of Him, all evangelistic work is bound to be fleeting in its general effects. Nor can it reach the deeper natures of many who go away from such services unimpressed. The film of misunderstanding on their minds has never been pierced. The evangelist means one thing by "Christ," and they another, and so there is no living contact between the real Christ and the man who needs Him. The same is true of "conviction of sin," for so long as there is this distorted conception of Christ, there must also be a distorted conception of sin.

So the vaguely luminous shadow which rises in such men's minds when we ask them to turn to Christ has no real convicting or moralising power, for it does not correspond completely with what in their inmost hearts they recognise as noblest and worthiest of a man.

What profit is it that we should confess One as Lord and God, when He is not the noblest that we know? Must not such confession tend to bring division and weakness instead of strength into a life? Have we not in this widely-spread ignorance of what Christ really stands for another explanation of the instability of revivals, and of the fact that so many remain untouched by them?

Was it not the clear recognition of this truth that made our Lord familiarise His disciples with His moral ideals long before He led them to any confession of Him as the Christ? He would have them know clearly at the very outset where He stood in matters of faith and life, and where He differed from "them of old time," before He thought it worth while to ask them to believe in Him as Saviour and Lord. And have we not light, too, here on that tremendous passage where He says that whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him, whereas he who sins against the Spirit (who inspires the conscience) shall never be forgiven?

Evangelism that does not lay this foundation builds not on the rock but on the sand. Its work cannot stand in the floods and tempests that are coming upon the world.

Only one thing can fully dispel the dense mist of misconception which lies on men's minds, and that is the manifestation through the lives and teaching of His followers of the human personality of Jesus, in all that living energy of goodness, of absolute trust in God, and love to man, and heroic confidence in the future, which comes to our memories whenever we



name His Name. Before these men can really know what salvation is they must see Jesus. When they have seen Him they will know that they have not been alone in the night and storm which have fallen upon them in the days of their youth.

(2) The second point is the necessity for a patient and sympathetic study of the mind of our alienated manhood as it emerges from the experiences of the war.

This second principle follows from the former. The evangelism of the future must take the fullest account not only of what the men do not know, but of what they do know. It is with this end in view that we have inquired into the points of contact with them. It may be that the picture which has been drawn is not accurate or sufficient, but if we have prepared the way for one that shall be more adequate we shall have secured our end.

The one fatal thing is to assume that we know all about them already, and that the only obstacle to be overcome is the reluctant will that cleaves to some cherished sin. Very often, no doubt, this is the real obstacle. We must never forget that we are dealing with free human beings who may will their own ignorance because they choose their own lusts and vanities. Evangelism that does not make its appeal to the will is not worthy of the name. But oftener, too, than most men realise, the situation is more complex, and can only be dealt with by a deeper understanding and sympathy.

We cannot do more than indicate broadly one or two further points suggested by our material in supplement to what has been said in an earlier chapter



of the appeal to the more thoughtful among the men. We are here thinking not only of that special class, but of all.

(1) It seems clear that the first great point of contact must be the universal belief in Almighty God. This has already been dealt with in another context.<sup>1</sup> It is the presupposition of everything.

(2) There can surely be no question that the great key position of the powers of evil that must be carried is the belief that the good life is impracticable. It is strange and sad to find in these great armies of youth in the prime of manhood so little spiritual hope, so rooted a belief that evil is stronger than good, and that human nature is a fixed and unchangeable thing. Yet no one who knows the New Testament, or Christian history and biography, will find in it anything inexplicable. No truth stands out from these sources more clearly than this, that Christian morality without Christ and His Spirit is for ordinary human nature an impracticable law.

But it is quite clear that there are great numbers of men in the camps and on the Line who have been awakened to the need for a deeper religion than any that they have known. The vague Theism which is so common has helped them in the hour of danger, but it seems to have little or no power in the hour of temptation. It gives them little hope about themselves and little power over their own lusts, and yields in the fierce temptations which are all about them. This faith is in most of them too indefinite to have any converting or moralising power. One witness speaks of "the

<sup>1</sup> Pp 277-279

frightful amount of temptation put before the soldier, who has no means of avoiding it, no matter how honestly he tries, without home or social life." "With many the disease has worked its own cure, or rather the penalties of evil-doing have awakened them to a poignant consciousness of what they are, and inspired a desire to return to better ways, but above all, indeed, a sense of their need of something above and beyond themselves to help them to keep straight."

Surely there is the great opportunity of preaching God in Christ as the great Liberator from every kind of servitude for each and for all. Freedom has a new meaning to-day, which it has not had for a hundred years.

(3) It has often been said that there is in our day a great weakening of the sense of sin. That is no doubt true, so far as the individual is concerned. But, on the other hand, as has been said, there is a much deeper sense of the sins of society than there was in the days even of the Evangelical Revival.

There is something here a great deal more than "grousing," or a mere selfish individual or class feeling. What gives these criticisms of society their real depth and strength is the conviction that the things against which they protest are morally unjust, which is a very different thing from mere resentment of unpleasant and painful things. The criticisms imply a new positive ideal of what the life of a nation ought to be.

But everywhere there is extreme haziness as to how things are ever to be put right. Nor do the men in any way apparently look to the Churches for any

help in the matter, and not a few seem astonished at the very idea that religion has anything to do with putting them right. Religion is purely and solely, they think, concerned with the individual and with the other world. It is here precisely as it is with the virtues of unselfishness, humility, and sacrifice which they practise, and with which they think religion has nothing to do.

Now the first evangelism, which is at the foundation of all the rest, set forth the idea of a Divine society. Our Lord did not conceive of salvation as something which any one man could fully appropriate for himself. It was too great a gift for that. It was a free gift of God to all mankind, a common salvation, whose riches they must work out in common. This, in effect, was the message of the first evangelists; they believed that God had given them the principle of a new world in Christ, and it would be impossible, as we have said, to imagine one more closely suited to the deep need of our age. There is no need to set the social and the individual gospel in any opposition, for they need each other to bring out the full riches of the Divine Gift. If we separate the Gospel of the Kingdom from the Gospel of Eternal Life through Christ, it tends to become a remote moral ideal or else a secular Utopia of culture and sanitation and comfort for all—an earthly paradise, it is true, as contrasted with the sad realities of to-day, but surely, when all is said, an inglorious final issue of all the tremendous toil and anguish of human history, and all the yearnings of the infinite soul of man. Such an earthly paradise would be, at best, like a vineyard on the slopes of a volcano, the un-

tameable fires of which will one day break forth in ruin.

On the other hand, without the Gospel of the Kingdom, the gospel of personal salvation tends to become a one-sided and self-regarding thing. Many, it is true, who have never dreamed that the Gospel is anything else than this, rise grandly above this inherent weakness, and live for the glory of God and the good of man by a certain implicit faith for which their theology has no adequate expression. But there are very many, and these are a growing number to-day, who do not find a gospel of mere individual salvation satisfy their deepest natures. Those who receive it, with its full implications, are apt to think such men shallow, and to look critically at any effort to meet their need by stating the Gospel in another form. But it is a case not merely for mutual tolerance, but for the closest sympathy between the two forms of evangelism. Why should not both have full right of way? It is clear that the New Testament contains them both, and that the newer form may even fairly claim to be the oldest of all. Assuredly we shall to-day miss a great spiritual opportunity if we do not meet the growing conviction of social and national sin and judgment with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Were the Gospel of that Kingdom fully brought home to these men, there are many indications that it would find a deep response. At present they have no idea of the breadth and greatness of Christianity. They do not realise that it has anything to say to the new questions that are more and more



engrossing their interest—social regeneration and reconstruction, the League of Nations, and so on. They think of it as a preparation for another world rather than as the way to a regeneration of life as they know it. There is here, surely, a great peril and a great opportunity.

(4) Finally, there is something very significant in the extraordinary interest which these men have shown in the missionary aspect of Christianity wherever it has been brought before them.

It is about the last thing that most of us would have expected. Missionary interests are usually considered to be the peculiar care of that fraction of the Church which is most deeply interested in the Christian life, and the idea that they could make any appeal to the non-churchgoing youth of our time can have occurred to few.

No doubt there are accidental causes of the extraordinary interest which has been shown. The war has brought home to the men in a new way the existence of other nationalities than their own, and widened their outlook. They have fought beside Goorkhas, Sikhs, and Bengalis, and they have seen the camps of African and Chinese labourers. They are at least beginning to think in terms of humanity. But there is more in it than that. The missionary speakers have brought home to them in concrete terms the idea of the Kingdom of God as a great civilising and uplifting force, which can enrich the whole of human life, and which is destined to conquer the whole human race. The only version of Christianity which they know is a "dispirited" and formal one. This is generous,



optimistic, and militant, and it comes to them as an absolute novelty. May we not take their new interest as a response to the Gospel of the Kingdom of God ?

Now it is deeply significant that it is this Gospel of the Kingdom of God that has for the past twenty-five years made the most powerful appeal to the youth of our own country in the universities through the Student Christian Movement and to the educated youth of the world through the Student Christian Federation. This whole great Federation, which numbers now more than 190,000 students of all lands, began in a small union of missionary volunteers, each of whom was pledged to volunteer for the Foreign Mission field. This ideal has continued to dominate the outlook of the whole throughout, but has become enriched by the ever-increasing perception that the one way out of social and international difficulties as well was the Gospel of the world-wide Kingdom of God. This movement in the universities of the world unites on an interdenominational basis every form of Christian belief. But, like every great religious movement, it has its characteristic ideas, and its two central ideas above all have been those which we have just defined, the idea of the Kingdom of God, and of the power of deliverance from sin, that comes from fellowship with the risen Lord.

Every thorough study of the religious life of our time must recognise something deeply significant in the steady progress of this movement among our educated youth. It is clear that its ideals have appealed deeply to an ever-increasing multitude. Now the Student Christian Movement is recruited

from practically every social class in the community, except the "submerged tenth." Students are not essentially different from the other young men and women of the nation, except that they are more gregarious and better educated, and therefore more conscious and articulate, and more awake to the currents of life and thought in the world around them.

The great value of this movement for us, therefore, is that, through understanding it, and the ideals and aspirations behind it, we can learn more deeply to understand what the great masses of the youth of our country behind it are feeling after in the spiritual life. It may well be that we have here but the first tremor of a deeper and mightier tide.

This at least is perfectly certain. If the constituency of the Student Movement came to believe that that was Christianity which these great multitudes believe to be Christianity it would simply go to pieces. It seems equally certain that if these masses came to see Christ and His Kingdom as their more privileged brethren see it, there would be a surprising response from great multitudes who are at present simply untouched by the Churches.

The problem is how to mediate and translate the experience gained in one special class of youth to the aptitudes and needs of all.

We cannot do more here than point out the vital bearing of the one set of facts upon the other, and express the conviction that we have here a shaft of light into the darkness of our problem, and that the preaching of the Gospel of the world-wide Kingdom of God is one of the tasks of the Evangelism of the

future, and that it will appeal to many who are as yet untouched.

“What the world needs to-day is Theocracy.” Could anything be truer? What is the Gospel of the Kingdom of God but the Gospel for to-day, the one possible answer to the world’s need? The real trouble lies in the fact that neither the world nor the Church believes the Kingdom possible, because neither of them believes wholeheartedly in Almighty God. We find the same thing here as we find in the soldier’s belief that the Christian morality is for him impracticable. We must, here as there, meet the wise and prudent when they say to us “You do not know human nature!” with the answer “You do not know God!”

Does Revelation, then, really teach that the Kingdom of God is practicable? If not, what did our Lord mean by bidding us pray “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven”? Are we commanded to pray for that which we deem beforehand to be an impossibility? Did He not say “With God all things are possible”? If the Church could be brought to the faith that the Kingdom of God throughout all the world were practicable, there would be changes in all our methods, and a new voice in all our Evangelism.

Finally, many have felt, during three years of war, in service among the troops, that the Church has never adequately appealed to the heroic in man. The war has proved to demonstration that there is in vast numbers of men an unimagined capacity for sheer self-forgetfulness and self-dedication to a great cause. The call of patriotism has done for them

what existing religion was wholly unable to do. Are we to accept this as inevitable, to say that men cannot respond to the appeal to the heroic in religion? Surely to do this is to think too meanly of our brethren. May it not rather be that we have thought too narrowly of our "holy and glorious religion" because too narrowly of the thing which the Church exists to accomplish in the world—the coming of the Kingdom of God?

"This is the great question which all who call themselves Christians should be considering on their knees while the war is still raging. The answer lies in a great measure with the Church. She has to enlist in her warfare for the Kingdom of God—the war which is never over—that capacity in men for service and suffering which the war has disclosed. How can this be? Would that I had no uncertain answer to utter! I fling these lines out to comrades in the Lord that we may provoke one another to find the answer. . . . Some things are clear. First, the Church has to acknowledge that she is not the Kingdom of God, but the means to it as an end. . . . Religious observances and organisations—all the whole apparatus of religion—have come to be looked upon as ends in themselves, whereas they are means to an end beyond themselves. People think that the clergy's one concern is the success of ecclesiastical activities and institutions. We clergy think so ourselves! It is not for her own interests, which are by themselves incurably too small to evoke the heroic in men, that the Church is in the world. She is in the world to change the world, so that its whole extent may be

filled with the glory of God, and may become worthy of the eternal destiny of the souls of men. Hers is a high and costly venture—she has strongholds to storm. In the attempt she can exhaust to its depths the capacity which is in men for dauntless self-sacrifice.

“Secondly, if the Church’s conception of her own interests must be changed, so must the individual’s conception of personal religion. Self-preoccupation is as fatal to the latter as to the former. Personal piety is not a careful self-salvation at all. Rather it is a salvation from self. It is the being lost to self in devotion and service to God and one’s fellow men.

“Lastly, if these changes are to be, they depend on one thing—a new vision of God in Christ, such as shall be for Church and individual the overmastering counter-attraction to self. What the world needs is Theocracy. If so, then God, as the centre and magnet of consecration, must be all vitally apprehended. He must fill the horizon of the soul. He must be the delight of men, to draw them out of themselves into childlike selflessness, so that as children they may enter the Kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Religion at the Front*, pp. 56–59.



## ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER X

#### UNITY AND CO-OPERATION

The men give "our unhappy divisions" as a reason for their aloofness from the Churches. We too often regard our divisions as inevitable, but they are a great cause of the "fog" about the meaning of Christianity. They have also concealed from us the drift away from Church membership. The present state of things came about during a period of rivalry. Co-operation is needed to remedy it.

The religious life of the country is outgrowing the existing ecclesiastical divisions. Common aims—*e.g.*, social reform, peace, world missions—have united men and women of different camps. The Interdenominational idea has sprung from this new fellowship of the Spirit.

The way to unity lies in a deepening faith in the Kingdom of God.

## CHAPTER X

### UNITY AND CO-OPERATION

is quite clear from our evidence that one of the most frequent reasons given by the men of whom we are thinking in this volume for their aloofness from the Churches is "our unhappy divisions." This charge comes, as will be seen, from witnesses of all kinds. Is it a well-grounded complaint or only a *tu quoque* retort given to mask deeper and more secret reasons? Is it really one of the master causes of the alienation? We are so accustomed to regard our divisions as inevitable that the practical evils are very inadequately realised by us. But it may well be questioned if there is not the closest and most fatal connection between the divided state of Christianity and that misunderstanding and "fog" as to its teachings and ideal which prevail. Is not the confusion and ignorance of the masses in great measure the inevitable reflex of the competitions and divisions of the Churches? Could we expect anything else? The average man inevitably feels that while there is so much divergence of belief among those who claim to be experts, clearness and conviction cannot fairly be expected of him, and contents himself with the residue of faith in One God, a general reverence for Christ, and a belief in immortality. It is a kind of

residuum on which all the Churches are agreed, a dim Theism more or less suffused with Christian ideas and standards, but, like residual creeds generally, wanting sadly in regenerative and inspiring power. We have surely to ask ourselves the question if, with our present divisions and the sectarian spirit which accompanies them, we have really the right to expect anything better. We have to remember that when once the adolescent comes out from the shelter of home, he is caught up into the world of human life and industry around him, which is mainly outside all the Churches. The odds are that he loses touch with his traditional communion ; he associates in factories, and clubs, and trade unions with those who have neither part nor lot ecclesiastically with him. He does not find the qualities which inspire him with admiration identified in any special way with any communion more than others. The lines of noble character in no way correspond to the line of ecclesiastical division. The whole business of denominationalism therefore seems to him confusing, unreal, and wholly antiquated.

All this process which had been going on in days of peace has been immensely increased by the war. Seen against the vast and terrible background of the trenches and the battlefield, ecclesiastical divisions look spectral and unreal.

We may lay our account with the fact that when the men return, they will be less inclined than ever they were to take any living interest in our divisions. The tendency of most will be towards a colourless undenominationalism which is unable to wield the full moral and spiritual power of the Gospel.

In many the result will be more vital. They will have wrought out for themselves in the furnace a new religious faith, a genuine belief in God and in Christ and in the Life to come and in prayer. But like the others they will have little sympathy with the existing forms of religious faith, or organised Christianity. They may be a potent element in the religious life of the coming decades. But neither the one class nor the other can of themselves really solve the problem, though the latter in particular will have their contribution to make to that solution.

What is really needed in fact is not a barer but a richer and fuller Christianity, something to which all the existing Churches shall bring the riches of their own life, and something more which can only be had from closer union with God.

It is also clear that not only have our divisions confused the men's thoughts of religion, but they have obscured from most of us the extent to which the life-blood of the Churches has been drained away, and they now put insuperable difficulties, unless some new way out can be found, in the way of retrieving the disaster of the past.

(a) Let us take each of these points in turn.

It is probable that the results of the present inquiry will come as a shock to many, and may awaken not a little incredulity. It is at least questionable if even after four years of war, with the new knowledge which it has brought, the Churches as a whole are not living in a fool's paradise as to what is generally admitted among those who have taken the trouble to make any real inquiry into the matter.

Why is this the case? After ages may say that from the Christian point of view this draining away of so much of the most vigorous life of the country from the organised Churches during last century was the most significant thing that happened. Yet if we turn to the existing ecclesiastical histories, it will be found to be almost entirely ignored. There is abundance of interesting detail as to notable personalities, great works of theology, controversies, legal decisions affecting the Churches and so forth. But all the while great and tragic things were happening in the dark. So far as the histories go, it is in fact exceedingly difficult to discover what at any time has been the real hold of the Churches on the masses.

But it is quite clear that, as we have seen, while the trouble began earlier, much of the present mischief was done during the Industrial Revolution, when the life of the Church was too weak and its organisation too dilapidated to enable it to meet the tremendous problem presented by the migration from country to town of vast masses of the population, and also by the great expansion of population which followed. Also, it had no true conception of what a Christian society ought to be, and therefore failed to have an adequate witness against social wrongs. We are in fact dealing with a problem for which the Churches of to-day are only very partially responsible. It is an inheritance, like "our unhappy divisions" themselves, from the past.

In Scotland the condition of things, while not yet so grave as in England, is grave enough to make all complacency absurd. It is significant that the motive



power behind the present movement for a reunited Presbyterianism, as well as the previous partial movements during the nineteenth century, has been more or less consciously due to the sense that the divisions of the Churches, which had been mainly caused by the provocative action of the State, were becoming a source of grave weakness in dealing with the immense displacements and expansions of population caused by the Industrial Revolution. In the case of the present movement for union between the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church this was put in the very forefront of the initial statements as the prime reason. It has become growingly clear in Scotland that for the Christian good of the land as a whole these unions are essential.

In England, of course, the situation is far more complicated, nor can any attempt be made here to grapple with the problem of complete organic reunion. The immediate task is the preparatory stage of co-operation, and, in particular, co-operation for the purpose of retrieving the disastrous situation which has been outlined in this volume. Of the urgency of the need for this there can surely be no doubt in the mind of any one who accepts as accurate the general trend of the evidence laid before him. Not only is the situation from the Christian point of view grave in the extreme, it is in constant danger of becoming graver still. Reasons have been given for supposing that the present situation cannot endure, and that unless the Churches awaken to its true nature it is likely to become worse.

If this be so, we must all be prepared for great

changes in our whole spirit and procedure. The present state of things has come about during a period of separation and rivalry. If this be true, the time has surely come for a general reversal of that state of matters and for the appearing of a new spirit of co-operation in order to meet the greatness of the task now laid upon us. For the initiation of such a new period the Spirit of God seems for long past to have been preparing the Churches.

For a number of years before the war it had become increasingly plain that the religious life of the country was outgrowing the existing ecclesiastical divisions. Biology has familiarised us with the thought that living things, in response to the challenge of their environment and their own inmost nature, may, as it were, outgrow the structure which they have formed under different conditions, and that their continued survival may depend on their power to modify it.

Something like this is going on to-day in the life of the Christian Church. The rigid ecclesiastical structures are no longer adequate for the necessities of our spiritual life. The whole future of that life depends on its power to transform the structure and form something more adequate to its true genius.

Men and women in different camps are finding in many matters their real friends and allies beyond the dividing lines, and with no sense of disloyalty to their own noblest past have been getting into ever closer alliance with them for these common ends. It is of deep significance that nearly all these common ends have been phases of the Kingdom of God. They have been those things which in our day men must strive

for if God's name is to be hallowed, His Kingdom come, and His Will be done in earth as it is in Heaven.

The Prayer of our Lord is in truth the programme of the Christianity of the future. In the international and social chaos of our time, it has suddenly become full of new depth and meaning. It gives us the rallying point we need for coming together in a new unity of spirit which will lead in time to a new unity of outward form rich and great enough to hold all our histories and all our hopes.

Great movements for social justice and the moral reformation of Society have brought together on a common platform and united in a common brotherhood men in all the Churches who, fifty years ago, would never have dreamed of such strange fellowships. Movements for the peace of the world have enlisted those of still more widely varied Christian communions. Most powerful and hopeful of all has been the association of men and women from many races and communions in the common aim of the evangelising of the world. The missionary ideal is, in fact, above all others that which has been active in the transformation which has already begun. It has brought back to the Churches the idea of the Kingdom of God which is over them all. To it more than to anything else we owe the re-awakening of Christian optimism and the spirit of unity. It is certain, therefore, that the whole future of the Christian Church in our country depends on the broadening and deepening of the missionary ideal, with its generous humanity and its call for faith in the living God.

There is something deeply common in all these move-

ments of the Spirit, the faith that this world is meant by God to be an incomparably nobler place than we have yet imagined possible, and that "the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea." Out of this new fellowship of the Spirit has sprung the Interdenominational idea. As we have seen, it is really the offspring of a new faith in the Kingdom of God.

On this Interdenominational principle, as we have seen, much has already been achieved in the way of co-operation. It is the basis on which those responsible for the production of this volume have been able to meet and reach unanimous conclusions on matters vitally affecting them all.

The true way to unity therefore lies in a deepening faith in and concern for the Kingdom of God, "the Christian good" of the nation and the world. If we can truly conceive this Kingdom and get together in working for it, deep vital forces will draw us together. "The Body of Christ has to recover the expression of its unity (the Body is one, though the expression of its unity is broken) through the realisation by its separate parts in their struggle for the Kingdom, that they belong together."<sup>1</sup>

It seems possible to advance much further than has hitherto been done along the same lines. Pending the attainment of a fuller unity, why, for instance, should it not be possible to have throughout the whole country some organisation of men and women from all the Christian Churches whose aim shall be the

<sup>1</sup> *Religion Behind the Front and After the War*, p. 115, by the Rev. Neville Talbot, C.F. Macmillan.

realising of the mind and will of Christ for the common life of the region to which they belong ? It is conceivable that such an organisation might be the one thing needed to-day to focus and to kindle the scattered lights into a burning flame.

It is certain that the time has come when the movements towards unity of faith and order among the clergy and ministry should be reinforced by the masses of the people, and for this there can be no better rallying point than the practical aim that God's name may be hallowed, His Kingdom come, and His Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.



## ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER XI

#### THE CENTRAL NECESSITY.

The problem is before us ; it is grave, but can be solved. Will the Churches seize the great opportunity which is offered ?

There is danger of depression. But progress is made by crises, not by slow growth alone. God is creating a new order, nothing is too great to hope for from Him. There must be an awakening of spiritual forces.

*The Central Necessity.* How are we to get the new vision of God which we need ?

In the past, epochs of renewal in the Church have been marked by a return to Jesus Christ—to the primary truths He taught.

1. We lack real spiritual hope, but in Jesus we find astonishing optimism.

2. We are without the spirit of love—but Jesus, seeing in men their kinship to God, loved them inexpressibly.

3. We are paralysed when the summons to hope and love comes, because we are not sure of God. Jesus was “the greatest believer that ever lived.” We need His idea of God.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CENTRAL NECESSITY

WE have nearly completed our work. We have done our best to secure first-hand information from all quarters as to the actual religious situation, to understand it, and to set the result faithfully before our readers. We have examined and discussed it and are practically at one as to the facts, their main causes, and the broad outlines of the solution of the problem which they present.

Grave as is that problem, we are persuaded that it can be solved, and that the whole immediate future of Christianity in our country depends upon its solution. It may be that this volume will meet with criticism and that its conclusions will be disputed. Even so, our purpose will, in part, have been attained. The first necessity is that the mind of the Christian Church, as a whole, should at once be turned to the whole question, and that it should be explored to the depths. Superficial explanations are worse than futile, for they can suggest only superficial remedies, and the situation can brook no delay. We do not profess to do more than contribute to the solution of the problem. That solution is urgent. The situation is essentially transi-

tional, and will become indefinitely worse or better. This is a time of peril, but also a time of unbounded opportunity.

Next to a refusal to face the facts, the real danger is that many in the Churches will be burdened by depression. They remember the untold treasures of men and money that have been spent in the war that might have been used for the service of the Kingdom of God. They calculate how long it will take before we can get back even to the poor standard of sacrifice which was ours before the war, the weary leagues of lost leeway that we have to beat back against unkindly winds before we can get to the old course again.

This is a complete misunderstanding of the whole position. What we have now to hope and strive for is something indefinitely greater and better than was possible in the days before the war. We were working then in an epoch that had nearly wrought itself out. Now it has come to an end, and a new epoch is beginning.

Human progress is made not only by periods of slow growth, but by vast crises. The evil of the world rears itself up and puts its full energies forth in a convulsive effort to hold its ground and win the final mastery, revealing thereby its true, malignant nature. But everything depends on the counter-stroke.

The last phase of the great war furnishes an illustration. Who, in the dark days of the spring of 1918, anticipated the sweeping victories of the autumn? So in the spiritual battle, if the uprising of the good is strong enough now to overwhelm the uprising of the

evil, there may be such a victory of the Kingdom of God as history has never seen, for evil always tends to exhaust itself and destroy itself by its very self-revelation.

But that there may be such victories, it seems as clear as day that there must be a great awakening of the moral and spiritual forces of humanity. The world is busy to-day with plans for reconstruction. But deeper than the need for reconstruction is that for regeneration, the "moral change" in ideals and in conduct, which is essential, if reconstruction is to leave us with anything but new mechanism and only the old driving power.

All who are really awake to the realities see that this rebirth of spiritual life is the vital necessity. But having seen this, they are apt to go no further. They think that such an awakening lies as wholly out of human reach as do the courses of the planets or the tides. We read the words "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth," as if they meant that the coming of the Divine Spirit was by an arbitrary decree of God. But that Gospel which contains these words has no more constant burden than that the way to Life, that is to the "indwelling of the Spirit," is through the doing of the Divine will, and through the belief of the truth. To wait for the doing of the Divine will until the spiritual change shall have been made manifest is fatally to invert the true order. "He that will do the will shall know the truth of the doctrine." "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Now it cannot be the will of God that the tragic

misunderstandings of the present situation should continue. Here at least the duty of the Christian Church seems clear and immediate. It cannot be the will of God that the mass of the youth of the nation should be claimed for Him in baptism, that at death we should lay them beneath the Cross of His Son, and yet that they should go through life in ignorance of the faiths which make all the difference for us. We have to dispel these misunderstandings, or definitely abandon the future. But the very facing of our whole duty, with the sense of insufficiency which that must create in our minds, will make us ready for that fuller revelation of God which can alone bring new life to the Church and to the world.

We, in the service of the Christian Church, need a new vision of God, and that means the discovery of something in God which as yet we do not know. How shall it be won? We are at last face to face here with the ultimate problem.

In the long history of the Christian Church there have been many epochs of renewal, such as that which the present hour demands. There have also been long periods of low tension vitality, when to impatient spirits it seemed well-nigh dead. But there has always been in it an astonishing power of recovery when the latent fires flamed out in sudden splendour and lightened over sea and land. Such great epochs of the Spirit have always been marked by a return to the Spirit of the Founder. Their leaders have drawn their inspiration, not by going beyond Christ, but by returning to Him. In order to do this, however, they have had to break clear out of the current thoughts of



Him in which they and their contemporaries were living, thoughts, moreover, which always claimed His authority and His Name. Such leaders have called men to a new discipleship, and with that return to the source there has come a renewal of life. So the long course of our inquiry leads us to the deep conviction that beneath all other necessities lies to-day the necessity for a return to Jesus Christ.

To some the words may seem a devout platitude. They think that they mean more "services," more preaching and praying, and conferences and "retreats" and "movements," and as these things have lost their appeal for them, they do not see how multiplying them will help at all. But something far more thoroughgoing is meant, which must needs be revolutionary in its effects. We mean by "returning to Christ" the simple going back again to what our Lord revealed about God and man and the future. We do not mean that this is the whole of Christian truth. But it is the foundation. It is presupposed in all the apostolic teaching, and in all the thought and life of the early Church. We lose the key, therefore, to all that the Apostles and Fathers taught when our sense of these primary truths grows dim. The root of all our trouble is that they have been growing dim. Is it not clear that one great reason why faith in the Incarnation, the work of Christ, and the gift of the Spirit mean so little to the youth of the nation is that they do not know that the essence of the Christian life is faith, hope, and love?

(1) We have seen that there persists everywhere among the men in our armies an extraordinary lack of

spiritual hope, a rooted conviction in the unchangeableness of "human nature." How has this come about? Have we not here a reflex of the want of real spiritual hope in the Churches, of that "dispirited version of Christianity" of which one of our witnesses speaks? Do we habitually believe that all men and women are meant to be sons and daughters of God, that the world is meant to be an incomparably better and happier place than it is, and that sin and tragedy may be overcome and cast out of it? Do we habitually expect not only that those who grow up in our communions shall reach the highest, but that there shall be those radical changes of human nature which we call conversions? Or are we startled by them? We cannot be startled by things which we expect. If we are startled, it would seem clear that in our secret thoughts we sympathise with the view of these men, that human nature is unconvertible. If that is the steady undertone of the life of the Churches, can we expect that it should be otherwise in the life of the camps? Is there not a deep affinity between these two things?

Again, do we generally and deeply believe that society can be redeemed and that the whole world can be won for God, or has the prevailing temper among us been acquiescent in social evils, and sceptical as to the winning of all humanity for the Kingdom? The question persists. Is this the real spirit of Jesus, or is there here a deep gulf between us and Him?

Let us look at the primitive history.

He lived in a far darker age than ours, when the world seemed to be growing old. His country, like

the Belgium of the last four years, was in the grasp of the invader. The religion of the old Covenant seemed to have failed. The faith of the prophets had narrowed and hardened into the legalism of the Pharisees. "Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests." It is only when we realise how dark was the age that we can understand the "immeasurable optimism" of His proclamation of the Kingdom of God, which meant nothing less than that the life of heaven was come to earth, and that His disciples had to live habitually in expectation of its victory. He tells them that in Himself that Kingdom had already come, and that in proportion to their faith will be their actualisation of it. He speaks with apparent approval of those who take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, and, at any rate, He assumes that such violent men are successful in so doing. He always approves those who are bold and eager in their hopes. He is confident in the victory of His Church. "The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." He teaches that prayer to gain its ends must be expectant. He has hope for the outcast and publican, and this is the real magnet that draws them to Him. And when men will not receive the gift of the Kingdom, and He voluntarily chooses the way of the Cross that He may bring the battle to a decision, He goes down into the abyss of death predicting His own resurrection and coming reign; and, rising from the grave, sends His disciples through all the world to evangelise the human race.

It is, therefore, in the very spirit of the Master that the greatest of His disciples puts hope between faith and love as one of the great virtues. That no modern

would do this, out of his own head at least, is absolutely certain. It is not part of the genius of modern Christianity, as a whole, confidently to expect great spiritual victories. This can only mean that we have a different measurement of the conflicting forces of good and evil from that which He had. We think evil stronger, and God weaker, than did our Lord and His disciples. This is the first great difference of conviction between us and Him. Both of us cannot be right. One must be right and the other wrong. To return to Jesus Christ here means a revolution.

Taking this as our starting point, let us pursue the inquiry as to what lies beneath this difference between the Spirit of Jesus and the temper of His Church to-day.

(2) The whole course of our inquiry has given us grave cause to feel that we in the Christian Churches as well as "the world" without have been lacking in the spirit of love. We do well to take comfort and reassurance from the fact that those who have been most closely associated with our men in the field tell us that, in consequence, their judgment of human nature has greatly risen. As a nation we are far richer in manhood than we knew. But we cannot stop there. Why did we underestimate them? We could not have underestimated them if we had truly loved them. "Love believeth all things: hopeth all things." There was far too little love among us, too little belief in the soul. Does not this substantiate the common charge which the men make against the Churches that they are lacking in the spirit of love and brotherhood; and that even more damaging charge, which quite unconsciously they bring against us,



when they show no sense whatever that their own kindness to each other has anything to do with Christianity ? If the Churches had radiated that spirit, could the men have failed to associate unselfishness with the Christian life ?

No one doubts that Christianity brought a new dawn of love to human kind, and few doubt that it was the life and death of Jesus Christ that created it. His coming surprised men in a condition of great poverty towards one another. Out of a world full of tyrannies, rancours, bitter memories, hypocrisy and fanaticism came this glorious birth of sheer loving-kindness, this friendliest Figure of all the sons of men ! Whoever was so free from all the weaknesses of love as we know it, its delusions, its jealousies, its softness ? Yet to whom have men ever been so inexpressibly sacred and dear ? " The greatest honour that humanity has ever had done to it," it has been truly said, " was that Christ loved it so well." The most characteristic thing He ever did was His death on the Cross for men. Why did He so love them ? When we press that question, we get a revelation as to the men and women around us. It was clearly because of their essential kinship with God. They were the likeliest beings to His Father in all the world. The love of Christ for men was due to the fact that He saw the soul in every man and woman, the noble imprisoned thing bound by the madness of sin. Unless the love of Christ were an unreasonable thing, it had at the heart of it a profound intuition that the ultimate truth about man was that, to use the old language, he was " made in the image of God." Here we have one of the deep springs of



the unquenchable hope which He had for the future. Clearly, if man were akin to God, then neither sin nor tragedy had any absolute rights in the world. They were intruders and had to be cast out. Their presence was unendurable. The true disciple of Jesus must be militant always and everywhere against them.

How does all this look in the world of to-day? Is it not the want of love, the want of the sense of the sacredness of human personality, that we have seen to be the cause of nearly all its mischief and tragedy? The treating of men as "hands" or as "cannon fodder," the organising of society with a view to the accumulation of military force rather than of freedom, the production of wealth rather than of men—this world of practical materialism is the definite and trenchant opposite of the spirit of love, which is the spirit of Jesus. It rests upon an implicit denial of man's kinship with God. The thing, therefore, which the world needs in our time is to forsake its false thought of man, and accept instead of it that faith in man which will work by love. Where should such a new impulse come save from Jesus Christ? No one in human history stands for this truth and love like Him. He is its prophet. Son of Man, or Son of God, or both, it is this faith of Jesus that alone can save the world, and set free the imprisoned race of men. How shall the Church find its inspiration save in a return to Him? The opportunity of the Church is great beyond imagining. We have seen new things in men. Can we not make the vision of the moment permanent? Should it not be a day of reconciliation with our brethren? Must we pass through

the days of economic strain which are assuredly coming on us all with hearts unhumbled and unhumanised ? Must the ice close again ? Has not the time come for definite social reconciliation, the new beginning of a mission of brotherhood, such as our Lord initiated when He came into Galilee with the message "The Kingdom of God is at hand" ? The Church of to-day has as definite a choice to make as the Jews had between Christ and Barabbas.

(3) Can we penetrate deeper or have we got to the very bottom of the problem when we say that what the world needs to-day is a new birth of hope and love ? That it needs these desperately is very plain. But is there not something even more radical presupposed in both these great virtues, some final master secret ? What is it which so paralyses many to-day when the summons to hope and love comes to them ? Is it not the doubt whether these are really workable in such a world as ours, whether the abysmal nature of things is not against them ? Here we touch the last secret spring of all the trouble of our time. Every diagnosis which stops short of this is superficial. This doubt is what lies behind the worship of force and the worship of wealth in "the world," behind the want of vitality and courage in the Church itself, behind the want of spiritual hope in the men. Human nature, by an irresistible inward necessity, is compelled to think of something supreme over all, and so long as it is not sure of that Being, its moral energies are paralysed. In other words, the ultimate need is for faith in God. It is here, above all, that things have gone wrong, and until we realise this and set them right we are playing

upon the surface of the problem. We cannot be too thankful for the revelation that the war has brought us that the manhood of our nation has not succumbed to the tremendous secret forces that have been sapping the faith of modern civilisation, that, in however dim a way, they do, in their millions, believe in God. They are not spiritually dead, they are asleep! What is needed is that they should awake from their slumber and that Christ should give them light. Is the Christian Church ready to do this great thing? Is it possessed itself by Christ's idea of God? Had it been so possessed, could the condition of things that we have been studying in this volume have arisen? Must we not rather say that the dim, fluctuating vision of God of the men is the reflex of a faith of the Church that has been all too faint even to face the great central problems of human life and destiny, and that their doubts are the result, too, of a thought of Him that has been too narrow to solve them?

Where should such a revival of faith among men begin save in the Christian Church, and where can it win the secret of such a faith save in a return to its Lord? We are astonished at the boldness of His conviction that the Kingdom of God had actually come to men, and that its consummation was within their reach, if they would lay hold. But the real secret of this boldness lay in the clearness and depth of His conviction of the nature and power of God. His hope was rooted in His faith. It is the certain and literal truth that "He was the greatest believer that ever lived," and that here is the secret of the glorious energy of life and love that were in Him. There is no one in all

the long ages of history, no great teacher in the world to-day, who even approaches Him here. The whole passion and stress of His life was to impart His idea of God, against the materialism of the Sadducee and the fanaticism of the Pharisee, in whose hearts the idea had become dim or perverted. Thus, wherever He goes, His incessant call to Galilean, to Jew, or to Canaanite woman is to believe more in God. The one thing that thwarts Him is the unbelief of His village and His disciples, and His time. On the other hand, He sets no limits to the power of believing prayer. It can throw down hindering mountains, it can still the storm, it can feed the hungry, it can heal the sick and raise the dead, it can bring angels from heaven, it can even call down the power of the Spirit to change the intractable hearts of men, it can naturalise the very life and joy of heaven, even in so dark and evil a time.

If Jesus Christ were to come among us to-day doing the same deeds and saying the same things in our modern speech, is it too much to say that He would revolutionise our whole current conceptions of God? If that be so, there must somewhere have come into our world of thought influences which have weakened and distorted our thoughts of Him, for nothing graver can be imagined than that in this central thing we should hold other thoughts than His. Have we not here the secret of the weakness of hope and the lack of love? Let it be ever remembered, also, that if such a distortion or impoverishment of the idea of God were general and long continued, it would be very hard to detect it, because it would affect all our standards. If for many



generations any malady affected a whole race, such a race would think of its condition as normal health.

In this call to faith there is an implicit revelation of God to us all to-day. The one reasonable basis for such a call is that God Almighty is incomparably mightier, nearer, more loving and ready to help than any human being, save Jesus Christ, has ever known.

The question that we must press is this : What is the kind of God that corresponds with a demand for faith like this ? When we seek to think it out there rises in our minds the sense of something inexpressibly great and beautiful and new, the vision of One Whose very Power and Wisdom are a Gospel, because of the perfection of His Love, Who is wholly with us in our truceless war against sin and tragedy, and Who is free to help us to the uttermost in every conflict for the coming of His Kingdom. Sin and tragedy, we are sure, have no rights in His world, and they are here not to be endured but to be cast out and destroyed. When we come out as disciples into the presence of Jesus Christ, prepared to take Him as more modern than any teacher of to-day, we enter, therefore, a world of new discovery of God and Man immeasurably more wonderful and beautiful than we have ever known. If we believe that He is here disclosing to us the very roots of the universe and the deepest nature of the men and women around us, the impression which so easily besets us when we think of past failure and of the wreck of these last years will melt and vanish. Depression in His presence is impossible. The future is lit up with promise. In the wreck of the old order we divine the beginning of



the new. We have a great and hard but immeasurably inspiring work before us in the coming years. The long battle of defence and retreat is over, the moment for a great common advance has begun. "It is impossible for the man who trusts in God not to rejoice."

The Son of Man has come to His Church along the great ways of history. He is among us to lead us on to greater and worthier days.

Shall He find us sleeping? Shall He not rather find faith? Let us expect great things from God, and attempt great things for Him.

## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX I

### THE BISHOP OF KENSINGTON'S REPORT.

REFERENCE has been made in the preface of this volume to the Report of a private enquiry from chaplains made in connection with the National Mission. We are informed that this Report is based upon replies received from hundreds of chaplains. It was drawn up in the year 1916. Its results are throughout in striking coincidence with those which we have reached quite independently. This is the more impressive when we remember that by far the greater part of our correspondence has been from combatants, nurses, and hut workers, whereas the evidence in this Report is entirely from chaplains. How close the agreement is may be seen from the following extract :

“ When one remembers the many schools of thought from which the chaplains come, their differences in training, in temperament, and in opportunity, this agreement assumes a still more remarkable character. There has been no conspiracy to say the same thing ; the conditions under which their work is done are often entirely dissimilar. . . . And yet the chaplains seem to have been forced to say the same thing again and again by their actual experience. . . . The one

great difficulty about which all the chaplains cry out is the soldier's and the sailor's ignorance of the Christianity in which he is supposed to have been brought up. The greatest difficulty and deficiency is ignorance. . . . The men with whom the chaplains are in contact simply do not know the very elementary truths of the Christian religion. The epithets they employ to describe this ignorance exhaust the vocabulary — 'abysmal,' 'appalling,' 'surprising,' 'amazing,' etc. Here is a characteristic verdict: 'Everyone must be struck with the appalling ignorance of the simplest religious truths. Probably 80 per cent. of these men from the Midlands have never heard of the Sacraments. The meaning of God, sin, repentance, grace, forgiveness, baptism, confirmation, is hardly known by the great mass of them.' There is scarcely a reply out of the hundreds received which does not place this first. It is not only that the men do not know the meaning of 'Church of England'; they are ignorant of the historical facts of the life of our Lord.

"Nor must it be assumed that this ignorance is confined to men who have passed through the elementary schools. The same verdict is recorded upon those who have been educated in our public schools."

Like our own Committee, this committee felt it essential, in order to get at the real heart of the situation, to discover "what those who have been alienated from the outward fellowship of the Church really think and feel." It reports that the answer is "as direct as it is overwhelming."

"The great mass of men fail to discover any real fellowship *in* the Church. It is all outward."



Entering into detail, the Report goes on to summarise the criticisms. "The Church is accused of being 'classy' and socially exclusive." "It is on the side of Capital, and afraid to stand for Justice between man and man." "Pew rents offend the workers." "The Church does not relate the Gospel message to the daily lives of ordinary men and women; it does not count as a live factor for social betterment." "It is so wedded to convention and rooted in the past that it is incapable of understanding, still less of sympathising with, the modern movements, both among men and women, which have for their goal the securing of a fuller, better life for the mass of humanity."

Intellectual causes of the alienation are not very prominent. "Some speak of a real difficulty to reconcile war with Christ's ethical teaching; others mention, and it is obvious feel keenly, the problems raised by childish and crude ideas about the Old Testament."

A very prominent place is also given to the divisions of the Church. "The men are hopelessly perplexed by the lack of Christian unity."

A large number of minor details are given, to which there are many echoes in our own report.

## APPENDIX II

THE Y.M.C.A. has already, as we have seen, wrought out in practice in the huts with the armies the first beginnings of an Interdenominational policy and has declared its adhesion to it in principle. The terms in which it stated its conception of Interdenominationalism were clearly stated in the handbook of instructions officially issued to all hut leaders in service in the field. They are as follows :

“The Young Men’s Christian Association asks to help the various denominations without discrimination. The Spiritual and Intellectual fruitage of each communion, those ideals for which the members of each and their forebears have laboured and sacrificed, are to be respected and valued. The Association desires that each communion should bring into the life of the Association its fullest positive contribution, the mysticism of one, the passion for freedom of another, the sacramentalism and ordered corporate life of another, the evangelistic fervour and missionary zeal of another, and so on.

“The Y.M.C.A. claims to be frankly Interdenominational and not undenominational. All Christians are welcomed without discrimination or partiality. Cooperation in the general work of the Association, as

well as in religious service, is to be such as in no wise to imply any sacrificing of principle or reducing of doctrine. No attempt to detach men from their respective allegiance is sanctioned or authorised. Rather, every encouragement must be given them to persevere and develop in their allegiance. It is contrary to the whole purpose of the Y.M.C.A. that the Association should become a substitute for the worship and corporate life of any Church or denomination." (The Red Triangle Handbook of the Y.M.C.A., Section II.)

In terms of these principles it is already laying its plans for the development of its work in the period following the war.

The War Emergency Committee of the Y.M.C.A. has cordially and unanimously committed itself to a declaration of policy in the matter, of which the more important passages are herewith given.

"Questions are frequently asked concerning the official attitude of the Y.M.C.A. to the Churches, especially in view of after war developments. Some unfortunate instances in the past have naturally led in certain quarters to misgivings as to the future, and the War Emergency Committee of the Y.M.C.A. want to make their attitude perfectly clear as far as they can in order to avoid the possibilities of future misunderstanding.

"It is their desire and determination to maintain an Interdenominational position, to co-ordinate rather than compete, and to lay the basis of permanent effective co-operation with the Churches.

"I. The Association believe that experience gained

through the war should enable them to be of real service in assisting in the solution of some of the present problems of reconstruction.

“(1) The emphasis of Y.M.C.A. effort in that reconstruction will be on a missionary programme, to reach, influence and win for the Kingdom of God the 80 per cent. of the manhood of the country at present unreached by any form of organised Christianity, and thus, as far as possible, to enlist and train those at present outside the Churches for their service.

“(2) The ‘hut’ will, it is hoped, be as familiar a feature of town and village life after the war as it is of the military camp of to-day, and thus constitute the main feature of constructive Temperance work throughout the country.

. . . . .

“II. To assist in carrying out this programme, and as a guarantee of good faith, the Y.M.C.A. proposes to take the following steps.

“(1) To appoint at headquarters an Advisory Committee representative of the Churches, to advise with the leaders of the Association from time to time on important matters of high policy, and to form a Committee of Reference, to which difficulties (national or local) that may arise between the Churches and the Y.M.C.A. in actual work may be referred.

. . . . .

“(3) To ask the Churches to receive deputations from the Y.M.C.A., when plans may be tabled and co-operation invited.

“The War Emergency Committee believe that they

will have the whole-hearted support of the Association generally in carrying out the above."

These aims have now been endorsed by the National Council as embodying its policy for the future.

In Scotland the situation is even more advanced. The resolutions passed by the National Union are appended.

### THE CHURCH AND THE Y.M.C.A.

#### RESOLUTION TO BE SUBMITTED TO MEETING OF THE NATIONAL UNION ON NOVEMBER 2ND, 1918.

This Meeting of the National Union endorses the Resolution adopted by the Council on May 11th, 1918, as follows :—

"The Scottish National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations, RECOGNISING

That the Association owes its origin and its sustenance to the Church ;

ALSO

That it is an Interdenominational society embracing and uniting Churchmen of all branches of the Reformed Christian Church in its membership ;

AND FURTHER,

That the work at home and abroad for our soldiers and sailors has only been possible of accomplishment through the ready service of ministers and laymen from all the Communion of the Church, and

That the future welfare of the young manhood of our country necessitates a clearer understand-



ing and a fuller co-operation between the Church and the Association ;

#### RESOLVES

(*First*) To affirm its devoted loyalty to the Church, and its determination to seek in all its enterprises to serve the Church, and

(*Second*) HUMBLY TO CRAVE the Venerable the General Assembly to receive a Deputation to convey to the Assembly its gratitude, and respect, and the assurance of its loyalty, and to request the Assembly to appoint a Committee to confer with the Association with a view to discovering means whereby the influence of the Church may be directly exerted in its counsels, and whereby the Association may have a recognised place in the life of the Church " :

notes with gratification the cordial response of the Churches to the request preferred by the Council ; receives the interim report of the Committee, and approves of the recommendations contained in the resolutions unanimously passed by the Joint Committee<sup>1</sup> on October 21st, viz. :—

(a) It is agreed that, inasmuch as it is the desire of the Y.M.C.A. that the influence of the Church should be directly exerted in its counsels, it is desirable that the various

<sup>1</sup> This Committee of the Churches and Y.M.C.A. includes the Moderators of the Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland, the Primus, and representatives of the Free Church, the Congregational Union, the Baptist Union and the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and other denominations.

branches of the Church should appoint representatives to the National Council of the Y.M.C.A., to act as members of the Council, during the period and in view of reconstruction, and in any case for a period not exceeding three years ; in the confident hope that a permanent representation of the Church on the various Councils of the Y.M.C.A. may thereby be secured ;

- (b) It is agreed, in order to meet the crave of the Y.M.C.A. in its original motion that it should have a recognised place in the life of the Church, that the various branches of the Church should invite representatives of the Y.M.C.A. to report on their work under the auspices of a Standing Committee or otherwise as may be found most convenient in the meetings of the Assemblies, Representative Council, or other Supreme Courts of the Church ; it being understood that the full place which the Y.M.C.A. will have in the life of the Church cannot be determined until its relation to the Church Guilds and kindred organisations has been satisfactorily adjusted :

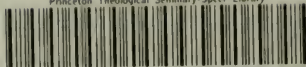
and authorises the National Council to continue the Conference and to take the necessary steps to give effect to these recommendations."

The above resolutions of the Joint Committee have now in substance been unanimously accepted by the Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church.






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